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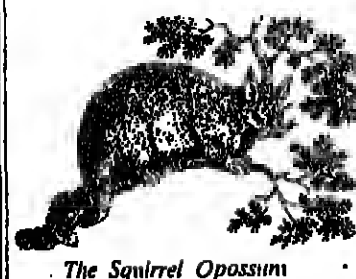
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## In search of the sublime

Denis Donoghue

RUSSELL FRASER

*A Mingled Yarn: The Life of R. P. Blackmur*  
375pp, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.  
£11.95  
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"R. P. Blackmur was our best American critic, a good poet, and a great man", Russell Fraser claims on the first page of his biography, making three difficulties for himself before he is obliged to make any. I have no scruple in accepting that Blackmur was a good poet, the measuring adjective being justified by about twelve live poems from his three books, *From Jordan's Delight* (1937), *The Second World* (1942) and *The Good European* (1947). Professor Fraser's concept of criticism doesn't coincide with mine, apparently. The best work in American criticism seems to me Emerson's in one way, Henry James's in another, and T. S. Eliot's in a third. If he means that Blackmur was superior to any or all of these, I don't agree with him but our disagreement seems not worth pursuing. If he regards Blackmur as a better critic than Kenneth Burke, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, or Yvor Winters, confining the competition to a few friends and colleagues, the dispute is even less worth pursuing. It is enough that Blackmur was, at his best, a splendid critic. There is no point in awarding a prize. As for his being a great man, I would have been inclined to agree with Fraser, if I had not read his book. The question I have to face now is: what is the relation between the qualities I warm to in Blackmur's writing and the vanity and pettiness which Fraser ascribes to him? Fraser says that Blackmur was a great man, but he has made it impossible for me to take the claim seriously.

If there is a common or received account of Blackmur's work in criticism, it runs somewhat like this. His early books, *The Double Agent* (1935), and *The Expense of Greatness* (1940), were remarkably acute studies in the language of modern poetry. His essays on Hart Crane, Emily Dickinson, E. E. Cummings, and other poets showed what the critical analysis of language could do. But gradually he let his vices defeat his merits. The later work, in the years after 1950, is prolix,

self-indulgent, not so much difficult as vain. "thwarted poetry", in Hugh Kenner's account. In some of his essays in *Longueurs de Geste* (1952), and in more of them in *The Lion and the Honeycomb* (1955), *Eleven Essays in the European Novel* (1964), and the posthumous *A Primer of Ignorance* (1967), Blackmur took himself too seriously, junketing around the world as sage for the Rockefeller Foundation, sounding off about the state and fate of nations.

More detailed versions of this account are given in Kenner's *Gnomon* and René Wellek's essay on Blackmur (*The Southern Review*, Summer 1971). Wellek makes much of Blackmur's penurious education, his ignorance of the several languages he liked to quote, his engaging in "deliberate obfuscation, verbal jugglery and even charlatanism". The essays on the European novel, Wellek dismisses as pretentious and ignorant. Kenner's essay fastens with notable irritation on Blackmur's language, his "doodling with other men's idioms in the hope that something critically significant will occur". His habitual procedure, Kenner says, is "to find out what he means by exploring the words in which he is trying to say it".

I am not sure that the procedure is as foolish as Kenner thinks. It is true that some of Blackmur's paragraphs make you light-headed. Wallace Stevens said that after reading ten or twelve pages of Blackmur, one comes away "longing for sex and politics". But Blackmur's verbiage is often a better experience than the sanity offered by lesser men. To read him at all you have to grant him a peculiar relation to words. He liked to quote a sentence from Elizabeth Sewall's book on Valéry, that "words are the mind's one defense against possession by thought or dreams; even Jacob kept trying to find out the name of the angel he wrestled with". Blackmur respected thought, but he didn't believe that thought is enough or that its official procedures are bound to succeed.

Fraser is informative on Blackmur's early years, son of unhappy parents, victim, too, of an aborted education. He read lavishly, but chose the books upon hunches and got into the habit of an opportunistic relation to whatever he read. He picked up a few notions from Croce, a few more from Santayana. A poor boy, he early

learned to affect the style of a puritan. No wonder he spent all his life trying to write a lordly meditation on Henry Adams: unfinished as it is, it is a thrilling book. At Princeton, the boy without a B.A. became a full Professor, directed the Gauss Seminar in Literary Criticism. He taught a famous course in Dante, Pascal, and



R. P. Blackmur

Montaigne, wooing their texts as if a full sense of them could only be erotic. Eliot and James offered further incentives. Some readers say that Blackmur's Epicurean style, in the later essays, was the regrettable consequence of his taste for the later style of Henry James, but the case is weak. The styles are incommensurate.

My own view is that Blackmur was a sublimist, and that what he was always trying to take hold of was the experience of the Sublime. He was not the Aristotle or the Coleridge he irritated rather than delighted to be told about. Monte Beligian, Matty Josephson, Billy Phelps, Lou Cox, Jack Wheelwright, Win Scott, Ted Spencer, Ged Bentley, and Borge

had been congealed into thought: that way, he could keep them alive at the risk of keeping them unmoved. He had no interest in sentences which pin down a meaning already, in effect, complete. A few years ago I heard Wellek saying, in a lecture, that Blackmur devised his style to lord it over the professors, or to humiliate them. There is no evidence in Fraser's biography that Blackmur was impressed or intimidated by trained academic minds, or that he made a kind of euphuism to show off in their company. He showed off, playing the prince in Princeton, but for other reasons, proving to himself that he had survived, and that like a prince he could shine. Fraser's book documents the cure Blackmur took to keep up princely appearances. It is appalling in its reflection upon such nonsense, and upon Blackmur's need of it.

Fraser has interviewed everyone, apparently, who came within a mile of Blackmur, so his book is generous in the detail of gossip, lore, and reminiscence. But some questions remain obscure. Did Blackmur edge Tate out of Princeton or not? Or was Tate's performance so erratic that he had to go? Granted that Blackmur's marriage to Helen Dickson was wrecked, how is it that she emerges, from Fraser's book, at least clear in her drearily relation to Blackmur, while Blackmur's relation to her is still, despite the detail, fuzzy? Had she any interest in his work, or was it healed not in existence for her because of Blackmur's domestic incapacity? Fraser is always busy on the page, bringing up one detail after another, but he is never quiet for long enough to adjudicate the evidence or show where it leads. He refers to Blackmur's talent "for personalizing the proximate past and locating himself at the centre" of it, a matter in which Fraser himself has a rare talent. He personalizes everything, as if he were giving a memorable performance, for the benefit of the Princeton Alumni.

Blackmur is called Richard throughout, and nearly everybody else is given to us in a colloquial form we have had no right to expect. A reader who can't aspire to become a member of the Princeton Club is likely to be told about Monte Beligian, Matty Josephson, Billy Phelps, Lou Cox, Jack Wheelwright, Win Scott, Ted Spencer, Ged Bentley, and Borge

of B.O. Boigerhoff, to give him the only name by which I want to know him). Fraser is a lively writer, but it is a pity he interferes so much with his perceptions. It is well enough to be told that Blackmur's style "grew prolix", but I can't make much use of the further description, "and sickly shining like the paintings of Douanier Rousseau". There are problems enough with Blackmur without running off to consult the Douanier.

But the hardest problem with Fraser's book is to understand how Blackmur's best work emerged from the wrecked little man whom Fraser has presented. Even if we accept the standard version of Blackmur which I have gathered from Kenner and Wellek, we have still to explain *Amni Mirabilis*, four beautifully perceptive and far-reaching lectures which Blackmur gave at the Library of Congress in January 1956. It is one of his finest achievements, not at all self-indulgent but grave and eloquent. There is nothing in those lectures of the whimsicality and obscurantism of which Wellek spoke. Nor is there in Fraser's biography any understanding relation between the nobility of the lectures and the life from which they came.

The trouble with Fraser's book is that everything in it is foreground: there is not enough background, or the peace and quiet in which it might be composed. There are lively scenes, like the performance of Dwight Macdonald at a Gauss Seminar. But Fraser needs to show what it meant to Blackmur that his mind was engrossed, as it was, with Dante, Pascal, Montaigne, Eliot, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, and James; or that he had intellectual as well as personal relations with Ransom and Burke. Fraser isn't helpful on these matters. Instead, he keeps up a nervous run of narrative, often defeated by his interventions and exclamations. He reports that sometime in the 1950s, two of Blackmur's students, Peter Putnam and Robert Fuller, sent their master a long analysis of his writing. In Fraser's account of the analysis, it is impossible to know where Putnam and Fuller leave off and Fraser takes up the story. Who owns these perceptions, for instance, Putnam and Fuller or Fraser himself?

Out of his deprivations he made "a

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music of the dry emptiness of the soul caught in reason. Making indifference dance, he carried reason to the side of God. Conscientious as ever, I turned to the notes at the back of the book and found this: "After Putnam and Fuller".

There are other places in the book where Fraser, running so fast, falls over himself.

Richard is the type of Alexandrian poet who has lost his way or found a better way. He answers to either description. Robert Lowell wrote later, in a poem "for Richard Blackmur":

His logic lacerates his vision, vision turns his logic to zantry. Confusion, I am afraid. "Logic lacerates the vision and vision turns logic to zantry" is what Blackmur wrote of Lowell, in a review of *Land of Unlikeness*, not what Lowell wrote of

Blackmur. In Lowell's poem "Playing Ball with the Critic" the sentence, slightly misquoted, is given in quotation marks, the allusion clear enough.

It is hard to know what precisely Blackmur was doing as a critic. His work moves between a set of terms, often two words in which he takes pleasure and finds incitement. Mostly, the first is chaos or a synonym of it, and the second is order: the first means what in life we have to have, else we die, the second how we act upon the first, the action being often not what is needed, too much or not enough. In a late essay from *The Lion and the Honeycomb*, the first is behaviour, and the second is morels, which is "what we think about in our quarrel with behaviour". The problem is how to give our richest "theoretic form" to behaviour. "A theoretic form is a way

of seeing, no more". Our great fear, Blackmur says, "is that our behaviour may overwhelm us; our great delight is when we have transformed our aspirations into behaviour; our fate is that we shall be mainly incarnations of our behaviour. *Macbeth* is our fear; *The Tempest* is our delight; *Antony and Cleopatra* our fate". Behaviour and morals, chaos and order, the actual and the real, momentum and the ideal in sight: these are the terms in which Blackmur finds the conditions of our lives. No "theoretic form" is complete. Apart from the many other considerations, "it is only the language we use which must abbreviate and truncate our full discourse". I take this as the explanation and at least the partial justification of whatever Blackmur did with language: he was trying to prevent his sentences from settling upon the abbreviations and

truncations he knew he couldn't prevent for ever. If you really believe, as Blackmur did, that the mind is inadequate to what it confronts, and that the languages we use are not much better, you are bound to conclude that failure is inevitable and that we can only postpone it. Criticism, for Blackmur, was a way of postponing failure: it was desperation, more often than self-indulgence, that drove his paragraphs into vertigo. "Doodling with other men's idioms" isn't an accurate description. Blackmur's recourse to other men's idioms, mostly Shakespeare's or Dante's or Eliot's, was his way of taking their visions seriously; that is, of using them. When Kenner calls doodling was Blackmur's way of staying within words so that, from within, he could drive them beyond their standard or official intention, lest they settle too gently

upon their abbreviations and truncations.

Professor Fraser's help is needed, these questions, so I wish he had produced a more detailed, though not too much of Blackmur's detail, if Fraser is to be trusted, demeaned him. Fraser couldn't get out of a chair without being crippled with pain, his limbs going dying before he died. He died of a heart attack on February 2, 1960, at age of sixty-one.

image of fire breaking from the earth" in Hopkins. Was Hopkins here by that powerful image of those "certain divine rays" which Vaughan said, "break out of the clouds, adversity, like sparks of a fire, speak of God in creation as the dancing like the blowpipe flame" in the metaphysical poet and poet Crashev, who speaks of the human God entering his creation "lightning in the spirit and matter, Miss Raine dominant theme, is nowhere as persistently or so profoundly as in the metaphysical poets. Ode, mentions them nowhere. I think this book, though he treats a Hopkins, by his own lambency, one cannot but feel that the position which in theory she holds.

character", which "Yeats understood to be the element in Christianity which scandalised the Greeks". Something in Hopkins responded to the "thisness" of all that is specific and individual, in other words to all that is "nothing is so pregnant and straightforward to the truth", he had written in his notes on Parmenides, "as simple yes and no". Even his view of the afterlife was an expression of this: "Hopkins looked not for the immortality of the soul but for the resurrection of the body... The comfort of the resurrection lies in the promise that the 'it is', here so fleeting, will there be made eternal; not another world, but this world experienced after another manner."

Hopkins was much influenced by Heraclitus, and in his poem "The Nature is a Heraclitean Fire" he relates fire to the resurrection. Kathleen Raine points to the "characteristic

that one had to admit that Blake - when all was said and done - was 'dotty'.

The book stands or falls by the chapter on Hopkins, though Miss Raine's pieces about the work of two long-standing friends, David Jones and Cecil Collins, are also enjoyable. These last two pieces are both themselves specific and edifying of the specific: the chapter on David Jones is even entitled "David Jones and the Actually Loved and Known". Thus it seems that when Miss Raine is herself faced with the actual, her philosophy changes. This essay closes with the words: "Incarnational was perhaps for him the most significant word of all. What is 'capable of being loved and known' is God incarnate." This univocally, under the circumstances, interesting word becomes more important still in the essay on Hopkins. She recognizes in Hopkins "this physicality, this incarnational

under the auspices of personal friendship. The popularity of books about the Bloomsbury group has strengthened this impression, though in their case friendship of the inner circle must have been helped by the fact that they were all doing different things, and to that extent in any rate, did not get in each other's light.

Delbanco quotes from Ada Oalsworth's notebook to show the husband number of writers whom her husband knew between 1905 and 1910. "That constant keeping up to the mark," he notes, "could not have failed to fire ambition. But there is no reason to conclude that they spoke of anything but cricket or politics. When invited by P. H. Newby, then in charge of the Third Programme, to contribute a conversation between himself and a friend on the subject of his writing, Evelyn Waugh replied: 'I am afraid this is not practical as I never mention my writing to my friends.' From the English point of view it may be that collegiality is strictly for colleges."

Except for Wells, however, the group in question were a cosmopolitan lot. Conrad and James were certainly aware of a world outside, where salons

and literary salons existed. But, as Delbanco points out, there was no leading lady and therefore no saloon. James, in any case, had severe doubts about the gentility of the other members and their wives, and this was sufficient to keep them apart.

Because of the lack of other evidence, *Group Portrait* concentrates on three themes: the tenacity of Brecht Manor by Stephen Crane and his wife, the Hotel de France, the collaboration of Conrad and Ford; and the correspondence between Henry James and H. G. Wells and their subsequent quarrel. There are other themes available - no one has yet studied the lifelong hostility between Wells and Ford, which culminated in the publication of Wells's novel *The War of the Worlds*. And where Henry James is concerned, there are endless complexities in all his relationships. But Delbanco's purpose is not literary research; he depends on secondary sources entirely - he even quotes Virginia Woolf as quoted by somebody else, and his citations will be familiar to anyone else with a cursory knowledge of the subject. Possibly he is aiming at

**Claude Glass**  
To Robert and Pamela Woolf

Eyes are too close to Nature to be nice,  
So Claude's disciples thought of a device.  
Through which they could evade the messy world  
By catching it in image as it curled  
Within a glass held up before its face  
To give God's barbarous hills and rivers grace.

His name became an impulse to impart  
To Nature all the better things of Art.  
Taught British tourists for a century  
To turn their backs on what they went to see.  
Meanwhile the men of coal and iron and steel  
Took out of Nature what they knew was real.

Now from the Tyne's black stacks and blacker steam  
We drive out to the Lakes and their museum  
To seek what never was but always risked  
The truth to be the fair, the picturesque  
A landscape picture that the common eye  
Will recognize as vintage human art.

Anne Stevenson

## Not quite immaterial

Iain McGilchrist

KATHLEEN RAINE.

*The Inner Journey of the Poet*  
208pp. Allen and Unwin. £9.95.  
0 04 821 054 4

There is no index to this book, but if there were it would be a short one. Of the eleven essays and lectures collected here, three are about specific writers - Keats, Hopkins and David Jones - and one is about the painter Cecil Collins; but in the index these would not have accounted for the principal entries. It will come as no surprise to readers familiar with Kathleen Raine's critical writing that the leading figure in the book is Blake, followed at some distance by Yeats, Shelley and Swedenborg.

There is a certain unity of ideas (sometimes amounting to repetition) in these essays. It is that ours is a materialist society, blind to the spiritual truths on which art is based. This is something one could argue about, but as far as it goes it can only bear being stated once. Indeed unless one has something more to offer than the gloomy diagnosis itself, it is questionable whether it is worth stating at all.

Miss Raine rarely comes down to examples, but even on the most general level the reader may wish to differ from her over one very important point. He may believe that the real distinction is not between the devotees of spirit and the slaves of matter, but between those who think that this division exists and those who don't. If one is on the look-out for the perils of the age, this easy splitting up of life into things spiritual and things material must count as a fair danger. Materialists are not people who overvalue, but who undervalue, the material world. If Blake is right in describing the body as a "portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses", and the world as a place where "every particle of dust breathes forth its joy", if God, for him, "only Exists and is in created beings and in Men", Kathleen Raine ought perhaps to consider redrawing the lines of the argument.

She transmutates Plotinus' assertion that absolute matter is, in itself, "base, and separate from the divine reason, the great fountain of forms" into a philosophy for the "material world", a very different thing. This results in some confident distinctions which are necessarily unacceptable: "sex is an animal function, love a human experience". Such attitudes are manifested both in often vague general pronouncements and in the discussions of individual writers. Keats, for example, is rescued by Miss Raine from the enticements of this world: "So far from placing him among the down-to-earth poets we see that Keats's words 'O for a life of Sensation rather than thought! place him among the Platonic lovers'. If true, this says a lot for sensation, and one wonders how far Keats would have had to go if he had wanted to show that he was attached to this earth. Even the reader who loves and admires Keats soon begins to feel ashamed of himself. How much more philosophical, how much more profoundly true to our human nature, is Keats, poet of sensible beauty, than are those arrogant detractors who have never looked so high."

A necessary consequence of Miss Raine's dualistic approach is that her judgments on poetry depend on the disembodied sentiments expressed, not on the particular words themselves. For magnanimous sentiments, Yeats, Shelley, and the prophetic Blake are hard to beat, and they are here mined for all they can yield. It was with some amazement that I read her verdicts on Wordsworth and Auden, two poets, however different, whose "meaning" cannot be fished out of their poems for discussion in this way. Apparently on the basis of his early political views, Miss Raine believes that, as a poet, Auden "looked for the steady conquest of the irrational", and consequently she rates his imaginative power well below that of Vernon Watkins. This is surely to confuse poetical sentiments with poetry. But Auden had already put himself beyond the pale mischievously remarking to Miss Raine, "at a party in New York",

## Birds of a feather

Frank Tuohy

NICHOLAS DELBANCO

*Group Portrait*: Joseph Conrad, Stephen Crane, Ford Madox Ford, Henry James, and H. G. Wells  
224pp. Faber. £8.95.  
0 571 11880 1

Nicholas Delbanco has planned his work to illustrate what he calls "collegiality" or "collegiality": a quality that he identifies as having existed among these writers when all of them were living close to each other in West Kent or East Sussex around the turn of the century.

Today, especially when one is resident at a university, it is easy to assume that writers enjoy each other's company, and to proceed to the conclusion that in doing so they will share useful ideas about technique or so on. The idea of writers' seminars, creative writing courses, and workshops, has spread from the United States to this country. If the same thing happened in the past, it must have been

**Claude Glass**  
To Robert and Pamela Woolf

Eyes are too close to Nature to be nice,  
So Claude's disciples thought of a device.  
Through which they could evade the messy world  
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Within a glass held up before its face  
To give God's barbarous hills and rivers grace.

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To Nature all the better things of Art.  
Taught British tourists for a century  
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To seek what never was but always risked  
The truth to be the fair, the picturesque  
A landscape picture that the common eye  
Will recognize as vintage human art.

Anne Stevenson

## BIOGRAPHY

# The corruptions of rhetoric

Robert Skidelsky

NICHOLAS MOSLEY

*Rules of the Game: Sir Oswald and Lady Cynthia Mosley 1896-1933*  
274pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.  
0 436 28849 4

Oswald Mosley was the stuff of which tragic heroes are made. Robert Skidelsky wrote of him in 1925 that he had a "Divine Spark". His flaw was that he could get away with anything. In 1921, soon after the start of his Parliamentary career, his wife Cynthia wrote to him: "My sweet... if you can't be good be careful". It was the kind of advice Oswald habitually ignored, until it was too late. In business life he might have made and lost several fortunes - and kept the last one. In political life, which allows brilliance, but not brilliant achievement, his gamble on fascism in 1932 was a gamble too many. He was compulsively retired into another game: the game of might-have-been, or the myth-making game. He and his opponents between them conspired to make him taboo - the embodiment of forces too dangerous to be useful in the public life. I wrote a book about him in 1975 in which I tried to reduce him to the more mundane proportions of history. But he still lives in that part of life made up of myths and legends; and will no doubt continue to do so.

To his eldest son, Nicholas, born in 1923, Oswald Mosley also appeared as a somewhat magical figure. In Nicholas's world parents and children had very little routine contact - separated by aunts and governesses and the spaces of large country houses. As a child he appeared to his father as a constantly playing-acting, Oswald would clamber down the chimney dressed as Father Christmas, or in some nonsense rhyme with a far-away look in his eye. Nicholas's parents and their friends, devotees of the fun-life, as it was known, would get up to absurd pranks, fall around, dress up in odd clothes, make weird noises. Every so often they would all rush off to the South of France. Nicholas concluded that the grown-up world was completely mad, but that the madness might have some meaning at a level beyond his understanding.

As he grew older the childish image of his father confronted the political legend, and the two got confused in his mind. Oswald Mosley now presented himself to Nicholas in the guise of Superman, the supremely rational being, baffled by the forces of inertia and wickedness in his attempts to save the world from another war, and build a land fit for heroes. In the Second World War Nicholas fought with the Rifle Brigade in Italy and spent his leaves visiting his father at Holloway prison. They discussed Goethe and Nietzsche and the Greek tragedians. "Dadling Nick," Oswald wrote to him in 1943, "I can never tell you what a joy it was to know you as an adult and to find what a perfect community of mind and spirit we had in searching together through all the higher and lovelier things of life." But something seemed to Nicholas to be not quite right. What had these "higher and lovelier things" to do with marching around in black shirts, saluting, "street-brawls" and attacking Jews in the East End of London? He started asking questions. Oswald explained patiently. He was in the revolutionary business: one could not make an omelette without breaking eggs. He had a complete answer to every objection. Time and the growing conviction that his father was the master of one thing only - the manipulation of words and arguments to shed the best possible light on himself. His father's language, he felt, had lost all contact with moral or practical reality. From the age of seven Nicholas had started stemmering. He now developed a theory about it: that stemmering on some level "is simply a protest against a too easy flow of words; against one's own and other people's tendency to bury living things under a verbal lava-flow."

Defeated in verbal exchanges with his father, Nicholas equipped himself to win the last argument. He studied the psychology and philosophy. He took to

writing novels and biographies about the games people play in their private and public lives, about the use of words to obscure the truth. But the game he wanted to understand above all was the game his father played - the marriage game he had played with his wife Cynthia, Lord Curzon's daughter, who had died when Nicholas was nine, and the political game. Oswald Mosley died on December 3, 1980. Ten days before that, when Nicholas told him he hoped to write a book about him, Oswald said he could have his papers. "It was as if," Nicholas writes, "he knew as part of him had always known that if anything was to survive of what he had cared about it would be to do with efforts at truth."

Less than two years later Nicholas Mosley's "efforts at truth" have yielded a merciless exposure of his father's verbal pretensions. The first of two volumes takes the story up to 1932-3, by which time Oswald, who was still only thirty-six, had run through his first marriage and most of the eligible society women of London, and through all the political parties. It is a story above all about the corrupting effect of a way with words. His father is presented as someone who manipulated words to transfer the contradictions and paradoxes of his married and political life from a sphere where they should influence (and restrain) action to a sphere where they need not - where they can be reconciled by proclaiming that they have been. It is the story of how a marriage and a political career were ruined by an inexhaustible capacity for rationalization. It is about the use of the arts of seduction to ensnare women and audiences. What Nicholas Mosley does is to provide a running commentary on his father's prose - his intimate words to his wife, his political speeches and writings - which has the effect of a needle pricking a balloon. For example, in his autobiography Oswald explained his participation in London's social life as necessary for "Ganzheit" or wholeness. Nicholas comments, "What these *wholeness* were useful for, of course, was the business of men picking up women." This is typical of his illusion-stripping exercise. Nicholas writes about his relationship with Oswald: "From my side at least there was loyalty and some hostility, anger and bewilderment, nearly always love." But the memory of the verbal humiliations which Oswald inflicted on him is too great, one suspects, for much loyalty and love to come through; or any undue consideration for the feelings of his father's widow, Diana.

Whatever Nicholas Mosley's motives in writing the book, it is the results which concern us. And there is no doubt that he has achieved something dazzling - a book which is immensely clever and interesting on many different levels. There is a brilliant chapter called "The Riddle of the Sphinx" in which he tries to sum up his view of his father - which is bestially that of a hero ruined by lack of self-knowledge; able to pierce through other people's deceptions but blind to his own. And interesting is Nicholas Mosley's controlling theme that individuals must work out their destinies within the "rules of the game". If they are to save themselves and others from destruction, his book also works very well in human terms. The pace is fast, the characters are vivid, his mother's death unbearably sad. Much of this effect is created by his skill as a novelist; but Oswald and Cynthia Mosley live up to the demands of art.

The doubts about his efforts at truth arise at a different, and more banal, level - the level of facts. Nicholas Mosley tries to confront his father's fantasies with reality. But his own notion of reality is itself a highly abstract one. He seeks to illuminate truth by myth and metaphor. The trouble is one can play precisely the same game with his own ideas about reality as he plays with his father's - that is to say that they do not represent the facts of life in their obvious, common-sense, meaning. Mr Mosley finds it very difficult to get out of the legendary game which his father set up for talking about his career. Like Oswald he is full of very interesting hot air. But one sometimes asks: what relation has it to what actually happened?

Take, for example, his account of his father's marriage to his mother. He presents Oswald (or Tom as he was known) as a kind of sexual monster, who enslaved Cynthia with baby talk, while he went off and had affairs. He sees the marriage as exemplifying Oswald's destructive use of words - in this case, they destroyed his mother. She could not win her arguments with him, she could not resist his naughty boy letters to his "darling soft nessed wegg-tail" protesting his undying love for her, she could not stop adoring him - yet she felt a falseness: if he really loved her, he would not carry on in the way he did. In the end, Nicholas Mosley writes, "she felt death as a condition in which human beings might at last be all-of-a-piece". And her own death, from peritonitis, at the age of thirty-four, seems to give artistic and moral point to the story. Yet this is not the point. The destructiveness lay in the situation, not in Oswald's manipulation of it to keep the marriage going. They were two incompatible people held together by love, and for whom separation would have been more painful than the pain they caused each other. Mr Mosley feels that had his father tried to deal with his mother as an adult she might have grown up to understand and accept the complexities of their situation - the "rules of the game" as the upper classes played it, which allowed affairs on both sides. But I doubt if this is true. Cynthia does not seem to have been that kind of person. The destructiveness of Oswald's marriage to Cynthia was followed by forty-four years of unclouded happiness with his second wife, Diana. Whatever the moral of the tale it does not seem to be the moral which Nicholas Mosley wishes to draw.

Another major misunderstanding arises about the relationship of his father's economic ideas to the political game. As Nicholas Mosley sees it, politicians trade ideals for office, because they recognize that to be fully serious about realizing ideals would require dictatorship. That is why they talk a lot about making the world a better place, but do not do much about it. This seems to me fair. But he then uses this framework to explain the politicians' rejection of his father's plans to cure unemployment, which seems to me to be simply wrong. He writes:

Of course unemployment could be solved: a leader could say - You will be employed in this way or that way or you will be shot. Most people did not think of this solution because it did not seem relevant. It might work, but they assumed it would be worse than the curse. But they did not quite say this, because it would seem that they were not interested in solving unemployment which they were. And so they said nothing. And they were deceived. And the curse started. The riddle was not solved not because it was too difficult but because it was too undesirable. But what was also unpalatable was the fact that it was that case perhaps the only solution was that there was no solution - one had to learn to live with the curse.

This is interesting and well-put, but what on earth has it got to do with his father's unemployment policies. The main points of which, partly derived from Keynes, have since become routine in systems which undoubtedly remain liberal and democratic? (Only in recent years have they started to be challenged.) Nicholas Mosley sees his father's plan in 1925 for an Economic Council to "estimate the difference between the actual and the potential production of the country" as a call to dictatorship. This task has long since been performed, on the Treasury computer. The truth is - and we are dealing with efforts at truth - that there was nothing in Oswald Mosley's economic plans which were incompatible with the rules of the game as they were then understood. It just needed time for the new ideas to sink in. Nicholas Mosley says the rules of the political game were needed as defences against the "dark forces" in his father's character; and this is true. But they were not needed in defence against his father's policies. The confusion arises, I think, partly because Mr Mosley is not really at home with the economic argument,



Interesting subjects: John Strachey, Fenner Brockway and Oswald (Tom) Mosley, at the Independent Labour Party Summer School held at Lady Warwick's house Easton Lodge, in 1926; reproduced from the book reviewed on this page.

and partly because he tends to see his father's policies as rationalizations of his drives and obsessions. In this he does him an injustice. This is a shame, for an appreciation of his father's desire and capacity for constructive statesmanship, as well as an explanation of its sources, would have bailed Mr Mosley's picture of a mainly self-justifying rhetorician. In the many excellent photographs of Oswald Mosley in this book, the only one in which he does not seem to be performing is when he is shown with John Strachey and Fenner Brockway at the Independent Labour Party Summer School, obviously talking about something which interested him. This side of him is rarely allowed to emerge.

Oswald Mosley's break with the political game in 1931-32 had less to do with the disappointment of the rational man who sees his plans rejected at some level he cannot understand than with the recklessness of a rich young politician who senses that his world - and the game - are collapsing and decides to "have a go" and see what he can rescue from the wreck. The torments of rationalization which Nicholas got from his father came later - after the gamble had failed, and the legend-building had begun. For the years covered in this book, one is left with the odd feeling that Mr Mosley has constructed a fascinating apparatus of thought to understand things which were not happening.

## Nicholas Mosley

### RULES OF THE GAME

Sir Oswald and Lady Cynthia Mosley 1896-1933

"The details are all here, unflinchingly and sometimes brilliantly presented, fixing Mosley once and for all."  
David Pryce-Jones, *Listener*

"Nicholas Mosley's fascinatingly revealing profile of his parents, their politics and... marriage. Riveting reading."  
Graham Lord, *Sunday Express*

"The author's own evocations of childhood, glimpses of his parents in the strange world of grown-ups, are beautifully well done."  
Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd, *The Times*

"It is both sympathetic and fascinating."  
Martin Gilbert, *Mail on Sunday*

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## Guy Bellamy

### THE SINNER'S CONGREGATION

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Graham Lord, *Sunday Express*

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Peter Grosvenor, *Daily Express*

£8.95

Secker & Warburg



# Writing to hounds

T. J. Binyon

JOHN WELCOME

The Sporting World of R. S. Surtees  
203pp. Oxford University Press.  
£9.95  
0 19 21766 1

Thackeray said that he would have given all he had to have written *Mr Jorrocks's Hounds*; Kipling admitted Surtees prodigiously, making Stalky quote his works in almost every sentence; Orwell thought highly of him, as did Sassoon; even Virginia Woolf wrote of his novels that "they have had their effect upon the language. This riding and tumbling, this being blown upon and rained upon and splashed from head to heels with mud, have worked themselves into the very texture of English prose." Yet, for all that, R. S. Surtees has never become widely known as an author outside the narrow circle of those who, like Mr Jorrocks, think hunting to be "the sport of kings, the image of war without its guilt and only five-and-twenty percent of its danger." It is high time for him to be seen, not just as a sporting author, but as a writer who deserves a place beside his better contemporaries.

Robert Smith Surtees was born in 1805, the second son of a Durham landowner. He went to Durham Grammar School, was articled to a solicitor in Newcastle at seventeen, moved to another firm in London at twenty and three years later set up his own place in Lincoln's Inn Fields. In 1829 he spent some time in Boulogne, becoming joint master of a very nondescript pack with a former colonel in the Life Guards who had made England too hot to hold him - end who, thirty years later, was to be hideously trampled as John O'Driscoll, the clubman gambler of *Plain or Ringlets?* who fleeces Jasper Goldspink to the tune of £4000.

On his return to London Surtees began to contribute articles on hunting to the *Sporting Magazine* in 1831. He published his first book, *The Horseman's Manual: being treatises on Soundness, the Law of Warranty, and generally on the laws relating to Horses*. In the same year he left the *Sporting Magazine* and set up, as its direct rival, the *New Sporting Magazine*. At this time, his financial circumstances changed radically: his elder brother died of smallpox in Malta and Surtees became the heir to the family estate.

In 1836 he was invited to stand as the Conservative candidate for Gresham, but withdrew before the poll; two years later his father died. Surtees moved north, took over the running of the estate and the family hunting interests and set up a pack of hounds - "This of an MP's or an MP compared to an MP's?" as Mr Jorrocks rhetorically inquires from the balcony of the Dragon Hotel in Hendley Cross. The venture came to a sad end, however, a year or so later.

*Jorrocks's Jams and Jollies*, a collection of sketches from the *New Sporting Magazine*, was published in 1838 and proved a complete failure.

## Testing times

Timothy D'Arch Smith

KAY ILLINGWORTH and KENNETH GREGORY

The Ashes: A Century  
222pp. Collins, £7.95  
0 00 216542 2

Rather shorter than the average one-day book of the 1920s and 30s, Kay Illingworth and Kenneth Gregory's compilation hurries us through one hundred years of cricket matches between England and Australia in under three hundred pages. These battles, fought for an urn of miscellaneous proportions supposedly filled with the ashes of a stump on ball cremated in memory of English cricketers killed possibly, owing to the

Surtees married in 1841; in 1843 he brought out *Handley Cross*, an equal failure. It was followed in 1845 by *Hillingdon Hall* - a dismal failure, and in 1847 by *Hawthorn Grange* - an utter failure.

Mr *Sponge's Sporting Tour*, 1853, was the first of Surtees's novels to be illustrated by John Leech ("the illustrious Leech", as Surtees calls him in a preface) and was, possibly as a result, the first to enjoy any success. John Welcome repeats, but puts no trust in, the view that Lord Seamerdale in the novel is a caricature of the Earl of Wemyss, who was said to have once sworn at Surtees hunting. Whatever the truth, it seems unlikely that the real peer would have been so poetical in his oaths as the fictional, who begins an address to Mr *Sponge*: "Oh, you unsightly sanctified, idolatrous, Bagnigge-Wells coppermith, you think because I'm a lord and can't swear or use coarse language that you may do what you like"; while another concludes: "Rot ye, sir! hangin' a too good for ye! you should be condemned to hunt in Berwickshire the rest of your life."

Leech also illustrated the second edition of *Handley Cross*, 1854, *Ask Monna*, 1858, *Plain or Ringlets?*, 1860, and Mr *Facey Romford's Hounds*, 1864. This last, however, was a posthumous publication for both author and illustrator, Surtees dying in March and Leech in October of that year.

Welcome takes us through Surtees's life at a brisk but informative canter. He is particularly - almost perhaps unduly - fascinated by the peculiar relationship between Surtees and another sporting journalist of the time, Nimrod (pseudonym of Charles James Apperley), best known now for his life of John Mordaunt. Some twenty-five years older than Surtees, Nimrod was his predecessor on the *Sporting Magazine*, and later contributed to the *New Sporting Magazine*. Though Surtees portrayed him with some affection in the final chapter of *Jorrocks's Jams and Jollies*, he went on to caricature him mercilessly as the sporting journalist Pomponius Ego in *Handley Cross* - a duel between the two was only averted by Nimrod's death - and later wrote a long critical end biography study of Nimrod's death, which is, in Mr Welcome's words, "a vicious and spiteful *invidio* of denigration." Insultation and derogation of Nimrod's abilities both as a horseman and a writer. Surtees's morbid envy seems to have been caused by Nimrod's brilliant success, both socially and as a journalist, compared to his own relative failure in these fields. As sportsmen, too, they were opposites: Nimrod was a bruising hunter to hounds whose attitude to hunting is expressed by the remark that "a mer' with five hunters and a hack makes a very respectable appearance in the provinces, but he has no business in Leicestershire." In contrast, the best that a friend can find to say of Surtees is that he is "a good but careful horseman"; he naturally hates McIlionen snobbery and is always ready to take a swing at the "customers", the crack riders of the "cut 'em down and hang 'em up to dry" counties.

Surtees's novels provide a rich seam for the social historian or the compiler of supplements to the *OED*. He describes clothes, food and drink in immense detail, copies out a coachmaker's bill in full, and is horrified that a West End tailor should charge £5.18s.6d for a "superfine black cloth coat", an article which his own tailor (Mr Webster, of Air Street) supplies for £3.15s. Though the *OED* recognizes *siphonia* ("a light kind of overcoat") it ignores the *pocket-siphonia*, advertised by "the persevering Mr Edmiston", which in *Plain or Ringlets?* Mr Bunting spreads beneath Rosa McDermott's feet. It remains silent, too, on the subject of *pumpy* (Mr *Sponge's* hat was "not one of those puny ovals or Cheshire-cheese flats") and *quaker-collared*. And it is to Surtees that one must turn for a picture of the rural life of the period, a subject avoided or skirted by his contemporaries.

Mr Welcome is for the most part sensible and interesting in his analysis of the novels. At one point, however, he chides Surtees for describing clothes "in almost wearisome detail, down to the last button and spur-strap", and elsewhere regrets that the author never imposed "essential form and coherence" upon *Handley Cross*. But it could be argued that it is precisely this meticulous eye for detail, combined with a rambling, inconsequential narrative, which makes *Handley Cross*, together with *Sponge and Facey Romford*, the minor masterpieces they undoubtedly are. Though there are superficial resemblances between Surtees and a number of contemporaries - Dickens, Thackeray, Disraeli, Trollope - in all essential respects he differs completely from them; among other writers he is closest, perhaps, to Gogol.

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Apart from the occasional descriptive passage he writes very conversationally, with a devil-may-care attitude towards conventional syntax and usage, and considerable use of slang and neologisms. One character is described as growing "more and more out-of-doorish, horse and horse-woodish", while another has "a good amfultish sort of figure". He belongs to that class of writers who take a delight in lists, enumerating articles of clothing and courses at dinner, or describing Sir Harry Scatterdash's abandoned breakfast table: "The litter of eggs and remnants of mutton, and broken bread and empty toast racks, and cups and saucers, and half-emptied glasses, and wholly emptied champagne bottles, were scattered up and down a disorderly

table, further littered with newspapers, letter backs, county court summonses, mustard pots, anconies, pickles." Minor, wholly irrelevant characters, mentioned perhaps once in the entire narrative, leap out of a book by virtue of a description which crams a three-decker novel into a single sentence: in *Handley Cross* the late master of the Stout-as-steel hounds dies from "drinking a glass of oxalle acid in mistake for gin, being at the time rather overcome by brandy".

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Peter Redgrove

RICHARD SHANNON

Gladstone: Volume One 1809-1865  
480pp. Hamish Hamilton, £18.  
0 24 01890 6  
To be published on November 8

H. C. G. MATTHEW (Editor)

The Gladstone Diaries: With Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence.  
Volume 7, January 1869-June 1871.  
640pp. 0 19 822638 1  
Volume 8, July 1871-December 1874.  
616pp. 0 19 822639 X  
Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35 each.

"What object Mr Gladstone may be consciously pursuing we do not, of course, venture to decide", Lord Robert Cecil (ultimately 3rd Marquess of Salisbury) wrote sniftily in an 1861 number of the *Quarterly Review*. "No psychologist that ever existed could solve such a problem." Neither Cecil nor the psychologists of his day, a more reticent breed than their post-Freudian successors, had the advantage of access to what Gladstone himself called the "very succinct and very arid Journal which I kept for about 70 years". From its forty-one volumes, crammed with revelations and self-deprecations, an infinite number of conclusions can be drawn about Gladstone's conscious pursuits, no less than his subconscious ones.

The history of those diaries, reviewed by M. R. D. Foot in his superb introduction to the first published volume, makes a story almost as fascinating and instructive as the diaries themselves. Soon after Gladstone died in 1898, John Morley was invited to write an official life. He was certainly not the family's first choice, and reportedly not the second either. For, despite his political proximity to the Grand Old Man, Morley suffered from certain limitations of sympathy, competence, and perspective. Sir William Harcourt, who shared his estrangement from bench Liberalism at the time, jocularly congratulated him on the commission: "There's no man better qualified than you except, of course, on the religious question - you mustn't touch that; on the financial policy - you don't understand finance; or Home Rule - you've got a bee in your bonnet about that."

Gladstone's son, realizing as much, directed Morley to steer clear of spiritual concerns, with the result that Morley produced a three-tiered monument that emphasized - and thereby aimed to propagate - its subject's secular virtues. His "primary political book on Gladstone", according to Foot, "was in fact doomed to portray him incompletely, simply because it was primarily political". Morley was not barred from the diaries, which were then among the accumulated mass of Gladstone's literary remains at Hawarden, but he consulted them selectively and haphazardly. His use of these "most intimate materials", Richard Shannon has asserted, was "floating, embarrassed, often tendentious, and in general gingerly insipid".

In 1928, a quarter of a century after Morley had completed his task, the diaries were separated from the Gladstone archive and locked away in the vaults of Lambeth Palace. Both archbishops officiated at the dedication. There the diaries sat until the mid-1950s, when the Clarendon Press bravely undertook to publish a multi-volume edition of the whole. In the interim, J. L. Hammond consulted a typescript version, which obliquely informed his *Gladstone and the Irish Nation*, a study that transcends the restrictions of its title, and his *Gladstone and Liberalism* (completed by Foot), a study that transcends the restrictions of its modest proportions. Without comparable benefit, Philip Magnus constructed a popular biography, which professional academics have found fashionable to scorn. More recently, E. J. Fuchs-Wanger and Peter Stansky have written useful books, each indebted to those early portions of the diaries which had already seen print.

At Stansky has remarked, "no final

biography - if there can ever be such a creature - can appear until Colin Matthew finishes his exemplary editing of the Gladstone diaries", begun by Foot. The two halves of this observation are equally valid. While the contents of the diaries will doubtless influence further interpretations, they will surely not preclude controversy so much as foment it. Still, there exists the natural temptation for scholars in the field to wait and see. From all indications, their patience will not be tried too much longer. Since 1968, when the first instalment was presented, six further volumes (including the present pair) have appeared at irregular intervals. Gladstone's jottings, punctuated by his innermost thoughts, are now available up to 1874.

In the wake of this mighty project - to no slight degree - in its light, Professor Shannon offers the first part of a "comprehensive new reading", which spans the years from 1809 to 1865. Harcourt may rest easy. Although, apart from a few tantalizing anticipations, Shannon has reserved the Irish question for subsequent examination, he displays a mastery command of fiscal complexities and a suitable preoccupation with Church doctrines and preferences.

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"Every historian", suggested A. J. P. Taylor, "should write out biography, if only to learn how different it is from writing history." Previously, I must confess, I had recoiled from Taylor's prescription, which implied that these two complementary crafts were, to the contrary, mutually pre-emptive. Shannon's book demonstrates the thrust, if not necessarily the logic, of Taylor's dictum. It succeeds brilliantly as an exercise in history, combining a notable breadth with acute judgments. Yet it achieves only a qualified success as biography. The main problem, paradoxically, is that the diaries keep getting in the way, bulging the contours of the narrative, overwhelming the reader with incidental reflections and details, and reducing the figure in the foreground to a fixture in the background.

That is not to say that Shannon fails to make excellent use of this indispensable source, merely that he tends to stand too much in awe of "the sheer grandeur of his patiently majestic unfolding through seven of the most crowded and consequential decades that any man ever lived". Furthermore, the diaries have seemingly infected his prose style, which surges into redolently Victorian cadences. Quick to recognize "Gladstone's high standards of verbal reticulation and mastery of the art of subordinate clauses", Shannon replicates them:

At last, in 1833, John Gladstone, now a patriarchal seventy, was able to abandon his nomadic existence and install himself - and Mrs Gladstone and Helen at his austere imposing new country seat at Fasque, made available by the happy chance that Sir Alexander Ramsay, bankrupted himself in building it to the designs of (probably) John Paterson of Edinburgh the most distinguished of the school of Robert Adam.

That parenthetical "probably", if nothing else, is the straw that breaks the camel's back or, less proverbially, the sentence's.

Quaint constructions abound: Gladstone does not campaign among the voters at Newark, but instead "ventures" to offer himself to their suffrage; he has "recourse to the prophylactic office of accosting prostitutes"; and, in reply to Russell,

# Keeping the loins girded

Stephen Koss

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the "animadverted indignantly". Peel once complained that he had "great difficulty sometimes in exactly comprehending what Gladstone means". And Shannon often does not help matters by his own convolutions and rhetorical devices, many of them curiously anachronistic. Again, the diaries appear to be his inspiration. Echoing Gladstone, Shannon speaks repeatedly of "modes" of policy or behaviour, and indulges in meteorological metaphors: "Other shapes were discernibly moving portentously in the January mists"; "Nor was the Oxford sky very clear"; "Enlarging horizons and shifting skies were as alarming and unsettling as ever"; and (three pages later) Gladstone "contemplated the immensity of shifting skies and enlarging horizons". This mingling of genuine and counterfeit Victoriana has a disconcerting effect.

Clearly a difficult book to research and to write, it is also a difficult one to unravel, though the effort is handsomely repaid. Not least among its merits, it shows that Gladstone was an exceptionally difficult life to live in "the age of examinations", as he both called and personified it, he constantly tested his own worthiness and, according to the super-human standards he set for himself, invariably found it deficient. His industry was prodigious. Sir James Graham, his colleague in Peel's administration, marvelled how Gladstone could do in four hours what took any other man sixteen to do, and he worked sixteen hours a day. Shannon invokes the diaries, where Gladstone admitted to the frivolity of taking time off from Treasury duties to take a "walk", to illustrate the "rigidly systematic control" that made "Gladstone's private life, a triumph of machine over confusion". He is particularly skilful in capturing the flavour of Gladstone's marriage of "rare excellence" to Catherine Glynn, his "hero-woman".

"It is sometimes said", acknowledged Gladstone, "that I am too apt to draw distinctions." Readers of this biography will not be disabused of that view. Shannon investigates them all, whether in areas of theology, taxation, family relationships, private morals, party loyalty, foreign affairs, or franchise qualifications, and he discerns the consistency of an underlying inconsistency. The cast of mind of a man who depended ultimately on the details of Revealed truth as the foundation of his political principles was not likely to be a conventional



(Gladstone's own flourish), where he nearly sank.

It remains to be seen how Shannon will deal with the long denouement that followed Gladstone's "great days of the 1850s and 1860s". In particular, one wonders whether his revisionism will extend to his own splendid work on Gladstone's involvement in the Bulgarian agitation of the late 1870s. Needless to say, the diaries were not open to Shannon's scrutiny in 1963, when he wrote that important book. He would be well advised to distance himself from the diaries to a greater extent hereafter. For all their richness, they do not facilitate an ordering of priorities. Patterning himself upon them, Shannon intersperses long compilations in which episodes of "domestic scuffling" (the matrimonial problems of in-laws and the religious vagaries of siblings, for example) jostle in awkward contiguity with expenditures on art and porcelain, allusion to legislative activity, biographical checklists, travel itineraries, social engagements, self-flagellations, and efforts to rescue fallen women. While it is mildly interesting to learn that "Gladstone finished *James Eyre*, which he judged a very remarkable but jarring book", his addition to a minor melodrama by Dion Boucicault and his attendance at a Punch and Judy show might well have been left unrecorded. Those who hunger after such details may proceed directly to the diaries themselves.

At the point where Shannon has taken leave of him, Gladstone was reaching beyond the electoral and intellectual confines of Oxford. His diaries, edited in the rooms at Christ Church that he occupied as an undergraduate, remain anchored there. H. C. G. Matthew, "faced by the sometimes bewildering obscurity of Gladstone's more cryptic journal notes, abbreviations, and references", was relieved to discover "that somewhere in Oxford, someone always knows the answer". Presumably, by dint of such "immense superiority" each of his informants would have readily known the composer of the national anthem.

The seventh and eighth volumes of *The Gladstone Diaries*, each staggeringly priced, encompass the period of the diarist's first premiership. They differ from their predecessors by the inclusion of previously unpublished Collier minutes and some 800 letters, all interwoven to clarify and illuminate the text, though occasionally tending to overstate the case. To pay tribute to Dr Matthew's editorial talents would, by now, be redundant. It suffices to say that he has intelligently maintained the standards we have come to expect of him. Gladstone, "unique among Victorian Prime Ministers" and possibly among all Victorian statesmen, "in keeping systematic records" deserves no less.

The introductory essay, lengthy and substantive, follows gloriously in the tradition set by Font and since perpetuated by Matthew. It is a major contribution to Gladstonian studies and thus to the field of nineteenth-century political culture. It tends to emphasize elements of continuity. Chief among them is the weight and durability of the Peelite heritage. Like his mentor, Gladstone eschewed any "overall legislative programme" which, by no means precluded legislative achievement, clinging to the concept of a "minimalist" state even after many of his colleagues as well as the rank and file of his party had begun to take a more interventionist line. However adept at combining "gamekeeping" and "uncertainty", he disassociated himself from those like the 4th Earl of Derby whose "occasional deviation" from noting want of principle, had been to allow "the excitement of the game to draw him off from the sustained and exhausting efforts of the high orbit".

These frames of reference, though decidedly not the constructions he himself placed upon them, are intriguingly similar to those adopted by Maurice Cowling and others in recent interpretations of High Politics. Yet Gladstone, surrounded during his first - and, as he mistakenly assumed, last - ministry by men who were "remarkably unambitious" was a high Churchman. Conceiving his primary responsibility in office to be that of coordinating and supervising the work of his ministers, he would

ultimately "replace the need for bargains between governments" and lead to the effective extinction of foreign policy. Similarly, a "union of heart and character" would suffice as colonial policy. "Ireland was for Gladstone a preoccupation, not an interest, an embarrassment, not an intellectual attraction", which he approached with caution and initially on strictly ecclesiastical grounds. Here, according to Matthew, Gladstone operated "in the spirit of Edmund Burke", with all of the limitations, but also all of the determination, that that implies.

What disclosures do these newest volumes hold in store for Shannon and other potential biographers, among whom one hopes to count Matthew himself in due course? Gladstone's intimacy with John Bright, whom Shannon describes as having played Sancho Panza to his Quixote in earlier times, was surprisingly strong and sincere. "In cosseting Bright," Gladstone cosseted Nonconformity, explains Matthew, who goes on to observe that Gladstone was much more successful with the particular than with the general. More than a channel of communication to one of Liberalism's sectional interests, however, Bright provided steadfast support and significant tutelage. Addressing him, Gladstone strove to make his policies "agreeable to your views", vouchsafed to him many a "confession of faith", and expressed an almost familial solicitude: "Pray take care of yourself, it is quite good for you." Knowing that his "plain speech" would always be understood and reciprocated, he wrote to Bright as he never could to Russell or Lowe, to whom he once apologized for "officiousness". In the process of cosseting, he evinced a genuine respect: "If I never argue with nor treat [sic] you, it is not from indifference. If you find that the acts we have done do not come into sharp conflict with your convictions, the announcement will fill me with unalloyed joy & satisfaction."

Gladstone "read Dollinger" and, more informatively, conveyed his ruminations in correspondence. His letters to Manning, wonderfully full and candid, help especially to prise open some of the more tightly bound journal entries. Most of all, however, the assembled materials testify to the rock-like cohesion of Gladstone's daily concerns, which defy compartmentalization. Working closely with successive chief whips, he was vastly more attentive to party and parliamentary affairs than he was popularly supposed. He fretted about a few peccant paragraphs that had crept into the pages of the *Daily News*, cultivated Levy-Lawson of the *Daily Telegraph*, and was "really ashamed" to have given "trouble" to Deane of *The Times*. He tended to the management of his estates and to the "wounded soul" of Laura Thrale Hayte, whom he afforded "peeps into my unintelligent self" in a series of riveting letters, appropriately relegated to an appendix. He "had a good deal of discussion" with Josephine Butler about the Contagious Diseases Act "and was greatly struck & pleased with her", and he prophetically defended his pledge to uphold Belgian neutrality "an enterprise which we incline to think Quixotic".

He prayed relentlessly and read voraciously, interpreting the edifying digestion of sermons for a second furtive glance at Stowe's translation of Ponce de Leon's discourse on Divine Love. On December 29, 1874, he turned sixty-five, and found himself

"in ill-health of the mental repose I had hoped engaged in - a controversy which cannot be mild & which presses upon both mind & body. But I do not regret anything except my insufficiency and my unworthiness in this & in all things: yet I would wish that the rest of my life were as worthy as my public life. In its nature & intent, to be made an offering to the Lord Most High."

The controversy in question was his impending resignation from office. Before it was delivered, he finished George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, which he had been reading (among numerous other things) for a fortnight, and which he pronounced to be another "very fine book". Gladstone's responses that of coordinating and supervising the work of his ministers, he would

## The unsinkable Secretary at War

Norman Gash

KENNETH BOURNE

Palmerston: The Early Years 1784-1841

749pp. Allen Lane. £25. 07139 1083 6

There has been no lack of books about Palmerston in the past fifty years. H. C. F. Bell's two-volume life, for long the standard authority, appeared in 1936. Then came C. K. Webster's classic monograph on his 1830-41 foreign policy; selections of correspondence by B. Connell; P. Guedalla and Lord Sudley on his relationships with the Queen, Gladstone and Princess Lieven; a scholarly book by Noel Pemberton in 1954; a semi-biographical study by D. Southgate in 1966; and a solid one-volume life by Jasper Ridley in 1970. Why, one may ask, write another? The answer is that, despite the merits of much previous writing on Palmerston, difficulties of access to the Broadlands archives imposed serious limitations on what could be done. Kenneth Bourne's book is in a class of its own for its foundation of archival material on which it is based, and the immense detail in which it is written. As far as one can tell, this will be the definitive life of Palmerston. Nobody is going to face the drudgery of going through that mass of material again with so little prospect of adding significantly to what Professor Bourne provides or differing significantly from his conclusions. This is a monumental work in both senses. It marks an epoch in Palmerstonian historiography; it is also a scholarly achievement which will earn the admiration of fellow-biographers.

Yet with the feast comes the reckoning. This is not a book for those who wish as much to be entertained as to be informed. Bourne has planned his biography on a large, leisurely scale that allows space for the exploration of every aspect of Palmerston's long career. Students of early nineteenth-century British history who wish, for example, to know more about university education in England and Scotland, electioneering, army administration, government patronage, the love affairs of the aristocracy or the staffing of the diplomatic service (these last two incidentally not entirely dissociated) will find indispensable information here. Despite these digressions, however, the architecture of the book remains firm. With so much material to digest, the sense of narrative movement is sometimes lost, but its purpose and direction is never in doubt.

Nevertheless, this is a book that is difficult to read and even more difficult to assimilate. Part of the responsibility lies with the publishers (or more fairly perhaps) on the present economic state of the book-selling trade. Assuming that one more volume of the same size will be required to complete the biography, the total length of the whole work will be over three-quarters of a million words, exclusive of notes and indexes. This is a crushing load to be carried by two volumes; three would have been much more manageable. As it is, with 638 pages of text in this volume alone, something like 600 words have to be crammed on each page. A heavy book and small type do not make for enjoyable reading. Bourne's scholarship - and his readers' comfort - deserve better than this.

For those who, undeterred, read on, there are rich returns both in the new information being presented and in the detail which, if not new, is restated with convincing authority. There were early puzzles about Palmerston's doing in the minor post of Secretary at War from 1809 to 1827? What gave him his subsequent taste for foreign affairs? How did he come to be a Caningite or a supporter of Catholic Emancipation, or of the Reform Act of 1832? These matters, on which previous biographers were either vague or silent, are now satisfactorily explained.

What also emerges very clearly is how slowly Palmerston matured as a politician. The "major of precession"

talents recognized in the offer of the chancellorship of the exchequer in 1809 is of course a legend that should have been buried long ago. In those days that office was of no great consequence and when the prime minister was in the House of Commons it was usually annexed to his official post of First Lord of the Treasury. It was simply that in 1809 Perceval was overworked and wanted a useful subordinate by his side, a kind of financial parliamentary under-secretary. The situation was not particularly attractive and two men before Palmerston was approached. Even so, as Bourne notes, not pride but timidity made Palmerston refuse it. In these early days in fact he gave little indication of what he was to become later. He was unambitious, was hard-working, assiduous over detail, but lacking confidence in public, and a poor speaker. In affect he seemed to have the qualities of a bureaucrat rather than of a politician.

In private life he had an assortment of irregular relationships with women and at least one illegitimate child. Lady Cowper, who was to marry him in 1839 after the death of her first husband, had become his mistress some thirty years earlier. Neither, however, observed too exact a fidelity to his long-standing and notorious liaison. He was also worried financially, dabbled on the stock-market with little immediate success, and acquired as a result a slightly dubious reputation. It is not surprising that for the first twenty years of his parliamentary career he appeared to his seniors in the government as a useful but by no means indispensable official underling. Though his apparently permanent appointment to the office of Secretary at War was something of a curiosity, nobody seemed disposed to offer him any important promotion.

Yet there was a certain protective colouring in this long chrysalis period of Palmerston's career. He was too unimportant to attract great enmity and too cautious to make great errors. As early as 1810 Lady Minto remarked that "he never will boast of shining talents, or great views, but he is the greatest degree, and will always swim where greater talents might sink". For nineteen years Palmerston was content to swim in his own little backwater. His Irish title, inherited when he was only eighteen, deprived conventional political honours of any special attraction and his debt-encumbered estates made a steady public salary uncommonly useful. In that aristocratic era, when prime ministers were brokers rather than butchers, ministerial posts conferred on their occupants a species of tenant-right. They could be ejected or bribed to relinquish their office but only in the rarest of circumstances would they be evicted without agreed compensation.

When, in the course of his ministerial reconstruction, 1821-22, Lord Russell wanted the secretaryship at War, he gave to the discontented department of Woods and Forests with a seat in the Lords and the prospect of succeeding in time as Postmaster General. Palmerston's refusal of these rather secondary prizes, however, was accepted without ill-will. Canning, when putting together his patchwork cabinet in 1827, first offered Palmerston the chancellorship of the exchequer, then changed his mind and proposed instead a colonial governorship, first Jamaica and then (raising the price) India. Both were declined but Palmerston still stayed on in his old office.

It is clear also that Palmerston, during Canning's lifetime, could hardly be called a Caningite in the sense of a personal follower of that erratic genius. The accident of events and a sensed affinity with Canning's style and aims made him a kind of posthumous Caningite; but for Canning himself he had the same reservations as many other contemporaries. Similarly, to the matter of Catholic Emancipation, expediency rather than principle, took him over to the Liberal side. As for Palmerston's rapid "transition" from Liverpool's conservative administration of 1827 to Grey's reform ministry

of 1830 by way of Canning's death, Bourne seems to make what the available evidence has suggested; namely, that personal animosity at the government's failure to secure his election of 1826 played a large part in alienating Palmerston from the Tories. Tory elements of the Liverpool set and in making him look more like his own than the Whigs who (for reasons of his own) had supported him on the occasion.

This, as it turned out, was a fortunate shift of allegiance since the Liberal party was going to be in power for most of the succeeding thirty years. Palmerston was lucky, in the rest of his career; it is one of the valuable gifts a politician can have. In the inexperienced Whigs of 1830, of office for a quarter of a century, an office-hardened veteran like Palmerston was a decided acquisition. What he expected to be given was leadership of the House of Commons with perhaps the Home Office. Instead Lord Grey, having had the Foreign Office refused by first Holland and then Lansdowne, turned for his aid to Palmerston, the new Caningite. It was a crucial and yet largely fortuitous turn of events. The importance of the accidental, which historians are sometimes slow to recognize, can rarely be less illustrated. It launched Palmerston against his expectations, into a career as Foreign Minister for which he was not remembered.

Yet, if he was lucky, he was also ill-fated. Good general help to make his bid for Palmerston at the Foreign Office was not every Whig's idea of a safe appointment and when Melbourne returned to office in 1835 he proposed to move him from that post to position as he had just removed Brougham for similar reasons from Lord Chancellorship. Palmerston, however, was not to be bribed or intimidated; Melbourne lacked the courage to drop him entirely and Palmerston had his first proof that he showed himself as tough as steel. He was uncompromising to his superiors as he did to his own inferior officers, he would not get his own way. It was an important lesson that he learned later, after the irreconcilable Lord John Russell. Of the four reasons, one imagines, why Palmerston found the Liberal party congenial political home was that it contained nobody strong enough to stand up to him until the advent of Peelite Gladstone twenty-five years later.

An assessment of Palmerston's Foreign Minister will no doubt be part of the second volume, but enough is said here to suggest that it will not be unfavourable. In the 1830-41 period, Bourne Palmerston showed himself better at Castlereagh in his realistic approach to European problems, better than Canning in his management of the conference diplomacy and better than Peel in his handling of the crisis. These of course are not criticisms. One could say with equal justice that Castlereagh surpassed him in breadth of vision and Canning in his ability to evoke the loyalty of his subordinates. Palmerston in the last decade of his diplomacy was in the last, what is more important, is that the quintessential Palmerston is always being distilled from the elaborate detail of the first volume - the personal enmity, the jealousies, the dominating and occasionally domineering manner, the increasing assurance, and the hardy contradictions that gained him his

but made him such a formidable enemy. When the rest is stripped away the pervading sense of Palmerston's personality that one carries away from this difficult but masterly biography.

*Ireland: Land, Politics and People* (331pp. Cambridge University Press. £25. 0 521 24577 X) edited by P. Drury. Includes among its subjects "Class, family and rural unrest in nineteenth-century Ireland"; "Pittsburgh"; "The Land League"; "Achievements and contradictions of John B. and the small class in the Irish political process"; "Bavaria".

JOHN HAYMAN (Editor)

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207pp. University of Toronto Press. 0 8020 5583 4

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251pp. Stanford University Press. \$28.50. 08047 11143

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YAN AKIN BIRD

Ruskin, Lady Mount-Temple and the Spiritualists

32pp. Brentham Press/Guild of St George. £1.80. 0 905772 075

JOHN RHOODES and DEL IVAN JANIK (Editors)

Studies in Ruskin: Essays in Honor of Yan Akin Bird

244pp. Ohio University Press. \$20.95. 08214 06272

When Ruskin, in retrospective moods, identified the turn of points of his life he was likely to give odd and inconsistent reasons for changes of heart and opinion. Students of his writing are used to this, just as they are to those "utmost-edges" he often invokes, or his "wisest guides" and counsellors, were not necessarily places that taught him much, or friends who advised him well. But on one time and place Ruskin and his commentators have always agreed: the stay in Turin in 1858 was a watershed.

In 1858, his fortieth year, Ruskin began the fifth and final volume of *Modern Painters*, which turned out to be a watershed in the first volume of the book which had made him famous. He became disillusioned with the Pre-Raphaelitism he had helped to promote, loosened his ties with the Working Men's College (an institution about which he had never had illusions) and realized, as a result of cataloguing the Turner bequest, that there was disturbingly more to his most admired artist than his earlier writing had dared to imagine. In 1858, his paedophilia became apparent, with the "girl of Turin", she was a "girl of about ten, with her black hair over her eyes & half naked - bare-limbed to above the knees - and beautifully limbed - lying on the sand like a snake". This was also the year in which he met Rosa La Touche. Ruskin's desire for old-master painting swung away from the *quattrocento* towards the earlier art had been mistaken in no acknowledgment of man's "animal nature". Most of all, biographers have always believed, it was his summer in Turin that led to his "unconversion", when "my evangelical beliefs were put away, to be debated of no more".

All this we know or infer from Ruskin's later public writings, and especially from *Fraterculus*, his autobiography. John Hayman has now performed the useful service of gathering the daily letters Ruskin sent to his parents in Denmark Hill while travelling on the continent in the summer. The letters greatly augment our knowledge of Ruskin's mind during those months. They also suggest new lines of enquiry for the Ruskinian, especially into the Swiss origins of his later utopianism, and his friendship with John Simon, the public health administrator. One must note the less record of a disappointed about the scope of this edition. It was mistaken of John Hayman not to print his other half of the correspondence, the letters preserved at Bambridge School that John James Ruskin sent to his son. At

## The way of the unconverted

Tim Hilton

timen the relationship between Ruskin and his father was close to collaboration; it was never less than inspiring; and we really need to know as much as possible about this remarkable man, the old Scottish merchant who once had been a child of Romanticism and was now, in his own way, a great Victorian.

Ruskin left England in May, as soon as he had finished arranging the 19,000 Turner drawings that were stored in the National Gallery basements, and travelled through Germany to Switzerland. At Rheinfelden, he for the first time in his life drew on a Sunday - a sketch of orchards he later considered to be a "total change in habits of mind". One would not think so from the drawing itself (which is in Ruskin's diary) but it is clear from these letters that an experience of 1858 created an impasse in his own art. Ruskin had never been, nor was he to be until his drawings of Venice in 1876, an instinctive artist (and those uncontrolled drawings are not his most successful works, only his most unlikely); but his graphic work had always had a convincing relationship to his theories, his taste. It is not easy to understand what was now happening to Ruskin's drawing, and Hayman's dingy illustrations do not help, but I surmise that he was caught, as he approached each sheet of his paper, by differences between Turner and Pre-Raphaelitism that his writings had sought to minimize. Now, his taste was more creative than his art, and when he sought Turner's sites to replicate them in his own watercolours he found that he could produce only "sketching". At the same time, his will for Pre-Raphaelitism "finishing" failed to help his pen especially in landscape subjects.

The result was that he turned to copying, an exercise that, almost by definition, has no place in the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic of making art directly from nature. But this was not arrested his abilities. After seven weeks' work in the Turin art gallery on the Veroneses "Sofia" and his adolescent daughter, Hayman offers no thoughts on the matter. But since one cannot be sure from the 1858 letters that any "unconversion" really took place (which makes me more confident of my suspicions of Ruskin's motives in the 1870s) we should have been given more, in Hayman's annotation and introduction, about Ruskin's thoughts and movements (he went on a dutiful pilgrimage to Torre Pelica) at the time. Hayman's notes are thin rather than economical - he scarcely describes who the Veroneses were - and although he has worked in a number of manuscript collections he has hardly started to bring their evidence to bear on the letters he now prints.

This is too sparing a use of his labours; or else he has gone into print too soon. It is important, as Ruskin's letters are published they should be fully examined. There exists a Ruskinian tradition of generous annotation and knowledgeable commentary. It was early established by E. T. Cook (with Alexander Wedderburn) in their *Library Edition* and in recent years has been brought to a high level of scholarly sympathy by Vao Akin Bird. The thousands of letters that remain to be published (the ones that John Dixon Hunt, in his biographical study, assures us will not "reveal any new Ruskin") often need the most careful and thoughtful treatment precisely because they reveal things about Ruskin's life and writing that the *Library Edition* wished to forget. Of such letters, those to Ruskin's cousin John Severn are the most significant. But perhaps the most directly important to Ruskin's literary life are those to the man he unabashedly called his "Master", Carlyle.

George Cate's edition of these letters has been long awaited, and with much curiosity, by those who have an academic interest in Ruskin (although they will already have a good idea of him from the Bodleian Library transcripts, a collection apparently unknown to their present editors). And as Professor Cate says, they will find much to be learned from them as well as inspiration in reading the letters

recognized today through literature. In Milton's "Avenge O Lord Thy slaughtered saints" (some literary people will also understand the joke in T. S. Eliot's "Cousin Nancy") were in Ruskin's early years regarded more directly, Margaret Ruskin, with others of her generation, imagined that these unlettered Lutherans of the Piedmontese valleys were the embattled survivors of a pure and primitive Christianity. This belief was no longer common when Ruskin reached his middle years, though it survived for some time in Presbyterial Ulster. Ruskin knew that the whole

together. But one is not far into this handsomely produced hook - it has the full panoply of the best academic publishing - before feeling that Cate's commentary is unreliable. Ruskin was not "engaged as art teacher for the three La Touche children"; George Allen is incorrectly described as Ruskin's "young friend" and he did not print Ruskin's books but published them. Lady Mount-Temple was not Irish; Frederick Crawley was not known as "George"; that was someone else, John Hobbs. It should not be necessary to have to correct so many mistakes, of which the above are a

Ruskin's study of an eagle from life. For publication details see caption on page 1154.

business was a myth, and so did John James, but neither of them would have dreamt of taking issue with Margaret Ruskin about it: what would have been the point of contending with an old lady in her mid-seventies, who happily believed what she had always believed?

My feeling is that Ruskin's later accounts of his "unconversion" in the Turin Waldensian chapel were exaggerated in order to mock the conversion experience of John La Touche, Rose's father, whose obdurate Irish Protestantism was in communion with the Waldensian church, and not of all in communion with the Christian thinking of the man who wished to marry his adolescent daughter. Hayman offers no thoughts on the matter. But since one cannot be sure from the 1858 letters that any "unconversion" really took place (which makes me more confident of my suspicions of Ruskin's motives in the 1870s) we should have been given more, in Hayman's annotation and introduction, about Ruskin's thoughts and movements (he went on a dutiful pilgrimage to Torre Pelica) at the time. Hayman's notes are thin rather than economical - he scarcely describes who the Veroneses were - and although he has worked in a number of manuscript collections he has hardly started to bring their evidence to bear on the letters he now prints.

This is too sparing a use of his labours; or else he has gone into print too soon. It is important, as Ruskin's letters are published they should be fully examined. There exists a Ruskinian tradition of generous annotation and knowledgeable commentary. It was early established by E. T. Cook (with Alexander Wedderburn) in their *Library Edition* and in recent years has been brought to a high level of scholarly sympathy by Vao Akin Bird. The thousands of letters that remain to be published (the ones that John Dixon Hunt, in his biographical study, assures us will not "reveal any new Ruskin") often need the most careful and thoughtful treatment precisely because they reveal things about Ruskin's life and writing that the *Library Edition* wished to forget. Of such letters, those to Ruskin's cousin John Severn are the most significant. But perhaps the most directly important to Ruskin's literary life are those to the man he unabashedly called his "Master", Carlyle.

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attempts to belittle Carlyle's appreciation of *For*. He is also inclined to believe that this fifteen-year-long demonstration of Ruskin's courage reveals only his "instability of character". Cate's lack of enthusiasm has led him into errors of fact as well as of interpretation. *For* did not appear "sporadically" but monthly. It was not a coterie publication addressed to "a communal group of his followers", as Cate describes the Guild of St George (in fact anything but communal: its adherents were not even told each others' names), but to "the workmen and labourers of Great Britain", the class least likely to follow Ruskin, or read him. Cate believes that after Rose La Touche's death in 1875 *For* "reverted to reminiscences of his younger, happier days". This is if not the exact truth, it is certainly wrong. The autobiographical passages in *For* did not then begin. They ceased, for they had been directed at Rose. Ruskin did not believe, as Cate asserts, that he saw her ghost; and it is incorrect to say that at this time he "became a more frequent visitor at the scenes held at Mrs Cowper-Temple's home at Broadlands" since he attended no such gatherings and had not done so since March of 1868. Cate confuses Ruskin's Frenchman studies in Florence and Assisi in 1874 with his work on Carpaccio in Venice in 1876, thereby destroying the beauty and individuality of these separate periods; and similar misconceptions mar almost every page of his long and confident introduction.

The subject will have to be tackled again, by a scholar with some feeling for the currents of Ruskin's life and writing. That writer will be privileged, but will undertake a large task. The friendship covers the greater part of Ruskin's literary career, from the days in the early 1850s when Carlyle first used to ride out to Denmark Hill (looking forward to talk with John James Ruskin as much as with his son) to the death of the older man in 1881. The historian of the relationship between the two men will find that it did not end when only one of them was alive, and the other damaged: Ruskin often became the more urgent as some mourning thought of Carlyle spurred him to further the work he believed they shared. This loss, which may have been the immediate cause of Ruskin's second mental breakdown, led him to write in his diary "greater responsibility brought on me by Carlyle's death". These are delicate and often stormy matters to disentangle, especially as Ruskin found many ways to interweave Carlyle's inspiration with his own more Christian and aesthetic interests, and then with his own biography. In the last few years of his life he mingled

thoughts of Carlyle with his own idealized Scottish background, allowing memories of his "early master" to become confounded with thoughts of John James, of Walter Scott, and of the "land of the leal" that these men represented. This is the true subject of the "Joanna's Care" chapter of *Præterita*.

The Scottish themes that run through *For* are not only elegiac in this way. They are often associated with the Greek heroic ideal. Thus, *Præterita* opens with the arrestingly discordant statement (taken from *For*) "I am, and my father was before me, a violent Tory of the old school; - Walter Scott's school, that is to say, and Homer's". There were few people to understand this sort of conjunction (though it is likely that Ruskin spelled it out to his Balliol "disciples", often themselves Scottish). One of them was Froude, and a study of the "minority of two" which Ruskin believed he formed with Carlyle would have to include their relations with this lesser but significant figure. Froude is the key to discussion of Carlyle and Ruskin's notions of how we should honour great men, a constant theme in their writing and the tragedy of their legacies and reputations. The perfect editor in the perfect literary executor. Froude was not absolutely ineffective in either capacity. But we might have had a clearer, more honest view of the purposes of Ruskin's life if he (as once was a possibility) had been entrusted with Ruskin's papers.

It was E. T. Cook, the editor of the thirty-nine-volume Library Edition, who most muffled Ruskin's political Morley, whose own prose echoes in Cook's statesmanlike evaluations was of a sort that made him recoil from the Tory background of Ruskin's thought, from the Ruskin-Carlyle-Froude relationship, and from *For* Clavigera. He could not stomach such activities as Carlyle's and Ruskin's support for Governor Eyre. It is a harsh lesson of life that great men can hold terrifying political beliefs, but Cook would not bring himself to accept this of Ruskin, whom he loved. Unfortunately the Eyre "cause" was a poor vehicle for Carlyle's and Ruskin's visionary donations. They wished, when something "needs to be said", to say it in the real centres, actual or symbolic, of national life. Carlyle (Froude tells us this) thought of entering Parliament to repeat what he had written in *Letter-Day Pamphlets*. Ruskin came to mingle *For* with his lectures at Oxford, whose university he took to be the heart of our cultural life (as may have been true, in the 1870s). How men should govern, in this

universe that is not governed by men's laws; how we should study, and to what ends - perhaps the ends of government - these are the themes they appear remote, today. But the fact that our literature has not for many years attempted such a "criticism of society" is surely a loss that literary historians should consider.

They do not do so, however, perhaps because academic "English" has never been able to come to terms with Ruskin. Elizabeth K. Helsinger's *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder* appears to have much in its favour. It takes Ruskin as a whole, or attempts to. It is long, as Ruskin books should be, and although its author has done no research she has read widely. The book is capably written, which adds to its air of plausibility. Yet it does not get near to its subject. Students of English literature too often imagine that they can define the activities of an art critic without reference to works of art. This is Miss Helsinger's assumption. But there is much to be said about a book that discusses, at length, the Richardson brothers and Hazlitt, who were negligible art critics and interested Ruskin not one jot, and at the same time ignores - for instance - a picture by a protégé of Ruskin's (that included a portrait of his wife and was completed in his own front room. I do not mean that Millais' "The Order of Release" was necessarily an important picture for Ruskin (though I would like to ask Helsinger why it was not): I mean that her approach lacks loyalty to the relevant. Instead of considering Ruskin's taste she has set herself to worry at the chimerical proposition that "sealing and reading are not separable activities for Ruskin; they are a single activity" and in wishing to "define his relationship to English art criticism" she ignores the fact that such a relationship belongs to the history of art.

Pre-Raphaelitism, for instance, finds no mention in Helsinger's pages. Yet this painting movement was a strong, various challenge to Ruskin's taste at just the time when his writing was most relevant to art. Is this not looked at things? And it is not also to the point that, although there are writers on art before the modern period, relevant art criticism belongs specifically to the avant-garde? Pre-Raphaelitism's adoration of the problems of modernism has disarmed Helsinger. She avoids everything that made Ruskin think about art after the 1840s. The result is that the active and prescriptive critic, and much else, in his teens, his twenties and his early thirties, and she sees him as a student of English literature. Here she makes some sound observations. She understands that Byron was important to Ruskin; she is glad to point out affinities with Wordsworth, then differences; and she knows that *The Stones of Venice* owes much to Carlyle.

Raymond E. Fitch's interesting book is weighted towards the other end of Ruskin's life. This is one step in the right direction. It is good that someone has written a general book on Ruskin that does not falter after discussing *Unto This Last*. In *The Poison Sky* Fitch gives us the best study to date of the books of the 1860s. However, in expanding his doctoral dissertation (which concerned Ruskin and mythological theory in those years) he has not ventured far enough beyond the period he knows best. He is wary of *For* Clavigera, and he has been persuaded by the old manufacturers of successful books. But to learn to be a Ruskinian and not take on *For* is to learn to swim on dry land; and not to realize that the desolate, exhausted autobiography is the record of Ruskin's subservience to John Severn (that hater of *For*) is to miss the first problem of the connection between Ruskin's life and his writing.

This said, one can be grateful to Fitch and his approach to *The Stones of Venice* and *The Queen of the Air*. On the *Stones* he has some good pages. They will strike a resonant chord in those who are Ruskin specialists. *The Queen of the Air* is difficult because it was employed a "marriage" of writing, vulgarly termed "free association" by most modern commentators, that became essential to the mature Ruskin. As Fitch can demonstrate, this elusive, rhetorical prose has its own coherence. But this is apparent only if you know Ruskin's writings rather



One of two sketches of tree growth by Ruskin, reproduced from the Ruskin Art Collection at Oxford: Catalogues, Notes and Instructions, Volume XII of the Library Edition of The Works of John Ruskin edited by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn.

well. E. T. Cook's annotations to the *Stones* obscure passages are to be found in the nineteenth volume of the Library Edition, which first reprinted (from the original manuscript) the forgotten book. These generous footnotes are excellent, a model. They were copied out, though not acknowledged, in Joan Evans's hostile biography of Ruskin. This was to demonstrate both her own expertise and her subject's lamentable failure to communicate with his readers. To this *locus classicus* of Ruskin scholarship and bad faith Fitch has returned, as though to show his own credentials. They are genuine. His exegesis of "the web of these old enigmas", as Ruskin described it, is more than competent. Perhaps Fitch should next try to write a book about *For* Clavigera.

*For*, which in Elizabeth Helsinger's judgment is "more and more a response to private need and not to public responsibilities" (how unlike his own writing) and which lacks the "organic unity" so firmly dislodged by George Allan Cate, has none the less a number of moments in which the public and private Ruskin come together, in wonderfully crafted confessions of the incidents of his unhappy life; and such moments are so much to be treasured that I cannot think why Helsinger and Cate discount them. One such is Ruskin's mystical experience in Venice in the Christmas season of 1876, recounted in the *For* of a couple of months later. Van Akın Burd, the doyen of Ruskin scholars, will shortly publish a study of "The Christmas Story", with its text. In preparation for that book he has now issued *Ruskin, Lady Mount-Temple and the Spirituality*, a lecture given to the present-day Guild of St George. As so often, Professor Burd's consultation of manuscript collections has given clearer outlines to matters that were heretofore, especially in this case, shadowy. Ruskin's belief in the spirit world was as lively and as much subject to mood as were his other convictions. This belief or half-belief sometimes marches with and sometimes mingles with his Christianity. It is on occasion "scientific", as Ruskin understood the word, and at other times it is deluded. From about 1876 it is by turns or at the same time deluded, "scientific" and mystical.

Here we need Burd's sympathetic research, for this is an area that has always been difficult for Ruskinians. The first problem was Rose La Touche's elevation, from 1876 or 1877 to Ruskin's communion of the mind. When E. T. Cook was preparing the Library Edition in the early 1900s he decided that he could not print the most direct evidence (some of it was in any case withheld from the Joan Evans) of Ruskin's great madnesses. Or, when he was able to print such material because of its integral place in another context, he hid it in the large forests of the Library Edition simply by not giving it mention in Volume 39, the index. What else could Cook do? He could not tell the world how, while Ruskin was living in a Sandgate lodging house (a matter itself tricky enough to explain) Rose's spirit had ordered the old professor to marry little - (I think I myself will withhold her name) - his mission. This was later, but it was germane to Burd's theme, *For* which were presented to the Broadlands by Lady Mount-Temple did not much convince Ruskin of their validity as ends, his mind elsewhere. It went to that cathedral of thought that was the Guild of St George, and its noble expression in *For* Clavigera.

Only one of the papers presented to Van Akın Burd in *Studies in Ruskin*, that by James Denholm on the publishing history of *The King of the Golden River*, is the result of the kind of scholarship practised by the dedicatee. The other contributions are mostly generalized essays. Two are them, by Francis Townsend and Mary Lutyens, consist of warmed-over gossip about Ruskin's marriage; these are especially unworthy. One is more significant. It is Robert Hewison's "Notes on the Construction of the *Stones of Venice*". Mr Hewison is a bold Ruskinian who knows how to go to his sources and make use of them; and he has suddenly grasped the key that makes sense of the sequence of notebooks Ruskin filled in Venice when preparing for the *Stones of Venice*. Once depends on the political position of the Ultra-Tories; the English politics of the 1820s and 1830s. This view of Ruskin's politics does not originate with Hewison (Ruskin himself tells us quite a lot about it) and the case is not adequately documented. But it is good that the real origins of Ruskin's social thought have now been presented for examination.

## The adventurer makes good

J. W. Burrow

J. A. W. GUNN, JOHN MATTHEWS, DONALD M. SCHUMAN and M. G. WEBB (Editors)

Benjamin Disraeli: Letters  
Volume 1, 1815-1834. 482pp.  
0 8020 5523 0  
Volume 2, 1835-1837. 458pp.  
0 8020 5587 7  
University of Toronto Press. £37 each volume.

Disraeli's early career is not merely well known, it is, to a greater extent than any other British politician's, folklore. Who, having read it, forgets, for example, the first meeting with "young Gladstone" at Lord Lyndhurst's, and the "swan very white and tender and stuffed with truffles, the best company there"? The swan is the mnemonic, of course, like the "oysters, Guinness and broiled bones" at the supper-party at the Carlton after the first opening of his - and, the Queen's - first Parliament. Moreover the extraordinary fulfilment of his political career, after so many setbacks, has retrospectively endorsed what would otherwise have been a fatuous or pathetic sense of his own capacities and destiny. In the perspective it provides the early life becomes portentous, a collage of remembered images and prophecies. "I could rule the House of Commons." "Though I sit down now the time will come when you will hear me." The outlandish figure, ringleted, extravagantly waistcoated, garishly trousered, haranguing the mob from the balcony of the Red Lion at High Wycombe, and howled down on his first attempt to address the House of Commons, seems to need, like Napoleon on the bridge at Arcola, a Grosvenor David to commemorate it - a major difference being that in Disraeli's case the trajectory of success and failure is reversed.

But even had he died at thirty-three at the end of 1837, the point at which the second of the first two volumes of his superb new edition of his correspondence ends, he would still have had an unusual and interesting postscript to his career. There was in fact a strain of the *picaresque* in him - "adventurer" was in his disapproving contemporaries' word; it is no surprise to find him appreciating *Gil Blas* and recommending Cellini's autobiography. The latter encourages one to read his career in the terms the analogies suggest, rather than in the prophetic folklore or epic mode, because of course they lack what no cartoon or biographer can entirely direct himself of the perspective of hindsight. Disraeli during these years, though exhibiting much energy and perseverance, was also quite literally waiting for something to turn up; chiefly, of course, a seat in Parliament, but the Macclesfield connection is not inopportune.

It is no detraction from the fascination of these two volumes, admirably edited to the high standards we have come to expect from Toronto, or from the rich promise of a collection of letters clearly destined to rival Bysshe and Macaulay's, to say that they contain so far no major revelations and that if anything they enhance rather than detract from one's admiration for Lord Blake's biography. The chief gap, Disraeli's letters to his mistress Lady Sykes, remains, though the editors say they have not given up hope. Forty per cent of these volumes, however, consists of previously unpublished material, and there are enticing promises of much more to come.

In any case, the effect of reading a full collection of letters is quite different from that of a biography, offering satisfactions and insights which no biography, however good and indispensable, can provide. Letters, compared with even the most leisurely historians' prose, come closer to the tempo of life. They do not merely describe or analyse protracted frustration or anxiety, and Disraeli in these years experienced both; they re-enact them, catching specks of time that slip in sunlight. If these letters do nothing to rescue Disraeli's shaky reputation for truthfulness, they do

enhance one's respect for his pertinacity and resilience, his courage - the quality Gladstone eulogized in the face of the hostility he so wantonly aroused and the difficulties he extravagantly incurred. As he said himself, "I rather like a row", and he not only suffered but indulged in, and enjoyed, scurrilous personal attacks, in the language of the *Edinburgh Gazette*: "The unlettered editor of the Globe, as ignorant of the history as he is of the language of his country... sought refuge in the vile and vulgar expedient..." Rows, like his notorious quarrel with O'Connell, brought attention, and Disraeli, on the evidence of his letters, was a happy paper-warrior, always convinced, sometimes on rather slight evidence, that he had had the best of it. As Bagehot said of Palmerston, "he did not at all despise the common part of his mind".

That was one idiom, for public hostilities. Another, still more remote from modern taste, was the arabesque of compliment which made a few letters here read with hindsight like prototype-testing for the Windsor Fairy: "has that pen plucked assuredly from the pinion of a bird of Paradise, been idle or creative?" Disraeli belonged to a generation unafraid of hyperbole, but few played at it with such zest and lack of inhibition, or understood it better, as presumably Lady Blessington, the owner of the quill in question, did also. The growing maturity one can watch in the early letters is largely a matter of self-knowledge and the ability to vary the tone easily and at will. The callow bombast of the letters written when he was twenty-one to Murray and Lockhart about the proposed new newspaper, the *Representative*, as published by the former and edited by the latter, is itself sufficient axiomatic evidence from the charge that he rushed them into a fiasco; if they were not warmed by it, they deserved what they got. The letters from his first two European tours, juvenile - especially the first - in their conventional expressions of admiration and in an understandable preoccupation with food, also have touches of sharp observation, like the Jinglesque caricature of the Irishman in the hotel: "How do you do Sir, wonderful city this Sir wonderful may have you seen the crucifixion by Vaodyke, wonderful picture Sir wonderful Sir".

On his third and best-known tour, through the Mediterranean in 1830-31, Disraeli is already marvelously excited, rapturously appreciative of exotic scenery, of Andalusian brigands and Albanian warriors, but even in his intoxication candid, observant, and amused at his own situation in a way that is lost in the scented boudoir-orientalism of, say, *Tanquerai*. But the pen that could describe Ramsgate as "that glory of Kent and first of watering places, and worthy rival of Ems and Wiesbaden" could hardly fail to rise to the occasion in Cadix or Constantinople. It is tempting to quote at length: the explosion of vigour, for example of General Don Governor of Gibraltar, with his entourage like a small German court, going in state for a ten-minute drive and replacing a foraging cap by his plumed hat on getting out of his coach to view a cave full of monkeys; and we travel back to the cottage, Meredith, myself, the Governor, and the cocked hat, each in a seat.

A striking if predictable quality in Disraeli's response to foreign lands was a total lack of the Protestant or progressive censoriousness which marked that of so many of his contemporaries, including Gladstone. In Spain "a wonderful ecclesiastical establishment covers the land with a privileged class, who are perpetually producing some effect". The Turkish Grand Vizier is "a consummate politician, unrivalled as a dissembler in a country where dissimulation is the principal portion of his moral culture" - a comment more significant in its cool relativism and casualness than the obvious bravado of the more notorious reference to "the delight of being made much of by a man who was daily deceiving half the province".

Most of these letters, except the last, are to his father. It was after his return to his father that Disraeli's shaky reputation for truthfulness, they do

Sarah. His feelings for her were clearly deep but not incestuous, and speculators on the relations of nineteenth-century men-of-letters with their sisters must ponder: "My darling", "My sweet". Sarah is the recipient of his political hopes and of his pleasure, in, as he sees them, and in polemical triumphs. He takes the frequent dashing of his hopes of a sea buoyantly, but ambition, as the fragmentary diary also pointed here shows, was a torment: "I am dying for action". Sarah also enjoys vicariously what was in the circumstances a solid political achievement: breaking into high society. The small dinner parties with minor authors, savants, and travellers to which Disraeli was born as his father's son give way first to vulgar mercantile splendour in Piccadilly - "the table and sideboard groined with silver walters and massy flagons, the drawings for China, bijouterie and Indian screens, like Baldock's shop" - and finally to the empire of Lord Hertford's and Lady Londonderry's, with the latter at a fancy-dress ball as Cleopatra "in a dress literally embroidered with emeralds and diamonds from top to toe. It looked like armour, and she like a Rhinoceros".

Disraeli's reporting generally owed more to the eye than the ear, the account of Peel, for example, whom Disraeli, who was Lyndhurst's man, never met, attributing the turbid "most useful with a knife" Sumner's eye is almost an auctioneer's, the candleabra in the middle of immense size and covered with groups of shepherds and shepherdesses, the whole mounted on green velvet; even the saltcellars and handles of knives

## First rate, second rate

H. C. G. Matthew

ANTHONY DENHOLM  
Lord Ripon 1827-1909: A Political Biography  
287pp. Croom Helm. £12.95.  
0 7099 0805 9

Liberal governments in the second half of the nineteenth century relied on the "whigs" for the staffing of many of their posts. These "whigs" usually appear in the textbooks as a monolithic body of worthies, ennobled spasmodically by the love life of Lord Hertington. Not surprisingly, close attention reveals a series of complex and often self-contradictory personalities. Of these Lord Ripon, conventionally categorized as a whig, was perhaps the most idiosyncratic.

Although a substantial landowner, he was not of whiggish stock for his father, was "Prosperity" Robinson, Liverpool's chancellor of the exchequer, and indignantly prime minister in 1828 (Ripon was born in 10 Downing Street, during his father's premiership). His career fell into no convenient pattern. In the 1850s he was involved in F. D. Maurice's Christian Socialist movement, with its interest in cooperativism and working-class education. This movement's immediate impact was limited, but it had a longer-term influence of considerable and often neglected importance. Its vocal, committed leaders - F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, Thomas Hughes, radical MP and Thomas Arnold's disciple - linked the Broad Church Christianity of the 1830s and 40s to a radical political analysis which offered a way out to an Anglicanism which found itself increasingly narrowly based politically and socially. Its integrative social philosophy was to have a permanent effect within the labour movement.

Anthony Denholm's biography takes the importance of Ripon's Christian Socialism as its starting point. He shows very fairly that Lucien Wolf, the perhaps rather surprising choice as author of the two-decker "official" biography (1921), presented Ripon as more of a conventional "whig" than he was.

Ripon's career in office offers rather a daunting task to a biographer: he held as many great offices of state as he

had imposing titles. He went by the successive names and titles of Robinson, Viscount Gunderich, Earl de Grey, and Marquis of Ripon, and he was Lord President of the Council (1868-73), Viceroy of India (1880-84), Colonial Secretary (1892-95), and Lord Privy Seal (1905-9). Mr Denholm makes a fair shot at avoiding a catalogue of explanatory narratives as Ripon moved from post to post. He shows that the ideas Ripon developed in the 1850s permeated his approach to the making of the Education Act of 1870 (his chief legislative monument) and to the staunchly held radical positions which he took on India, Ireland and the colonies. Ripon declined to play the party game. He was that unusual creature in the world of politics, a man without guile and with coherently articulated and persistently held principles. His position in the House of Lords allowed him to keep his distance from much of the infighting of late-Victorian political life.

Two aspects of his career could have done with more attention. Ripon was Grand Master of English Freemasons until 1874. The role - and even indeed the membership - of Freemasons in Victorian politics is virtually

uncharted. Ripon was certainly an important Freemason, and it would have been interesting to have seen how this related to his social and political life and views - and in particular to his Christian Socialism. The materials for this have no doubt not survived in Ripon's own papers, but they may be reposed elsewhere. In 1874 Ripon caused a sensation by apostatizing to Roman Catholicism. For a man of the F. D. Maurice school this appeared a particularly eccentric act. Ripon's reasons are probably unrecuperable, and Denholm gives a sensible enough account of what they might have been. But we learn little about how Ripon, the only Roman Catholic of real political weight in late-Victorian politics - related to the Catholic community and its political aspirations, except with respect to the row about the procession of the Host which was the occasion of his resignation from Asquith's Cabinet in 1909.

Ripon was, Gladstone accurately observed, "a first rate statesman of the second rank". Mr Denholm's competent biography shows how unusual "second rank" Victorian statesmen sometimes were.

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Here is a bold new vision of Victorian culture: a study of myths of womanhood that shatters the usual generalizations about the squeezed, crushed, and ageless Victorian woman. Through copious examples drawn from literature, art, and biography, Auerbach reconstructs three central paradigms: the angel/demon, the old maid, and the fallen woman. She shows how these animate a pervasive Victorian vision of a mobile female outcast with divine and demonic powers. Fear of such disruptive, self-creating figures, she argues, produces the approved ideal of the dutiful, family-bound woman.

Auerbach looks at a wonderful variety of sources: Stevenson, Daudet, and Freud; poets and major and minor novelists; Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, and Ruskin; lives of women; great and unknown; Anglican altar-books, and Magdalen houses; hand-painted and the theatre; Pre-Raphaelite paintings and contemporary cartoons and book illustrations. Reinterpreting a medley of fables, she demonstrates that female power inspired a vivid myth central to the spirit of the age.

To be published soon. £12.50.

## Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder by Elizabeth K. Helsinger

"This study of Ruskin the critic starts with an examination of the reforms in perception that his first works effected, and branches into a consideration of the evolution of a new critical and aesthetic tradition in Victorian England and the part Ruskin played in it. This book is learned and subtle - a brilliant piece of work." - *The New Yorker*

Published August 1982. £17.50.

Harvard University Press  
The Bookingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SD.



# Crewe to the Carlos

J. K. L. Walker

WILLIAM COOPER

Scenes from Metropolis Life  
214pp. Macmillan. £6.95.  
0 353 34203 X

William Cooper has long been viewed as the precursor of the novelists of the 1950s, the pre-echo to the full-frequency-range sonorities of Kingsley Amis, John Wain, John Braine, Alan Sillitoe and their followers. The label, with its patronizing overtones, is one that few writers would welcome, least of all perhaps Cooper, whose characteristic tone of self-contained irony argues an altogether more independent status for his work. This tone is to be found in its most poignant in his new novel *Scenes from Metropolis Life*.

The novel appears with a curious publishing history. Originally written more than thirty years ago as a sequel to *Scenes from Provincial Life* — the work which, in 1950, established its author's reputation (and which is now reissued) — the novel now into legal difficulties and never reached the bookshelves. Cooper's habit of drawing his characters closely from life seems to have been responsible for this. Some idea of the effect that the incident had on the author may be gauged from the later chapters of his 1961 novel *Scenes from Married Life* (now also reissued), which feature a similar episode — although there it is given a happier twist.

Joe Linn, the anti-hero of all three novels, from the pre-war schoolmaster of *Scenes from Provincial Life* is now, in his belated sequel, translated into an unestablished First Division civil servant working in a Whitehall department concerned with scientific personnel and defence materiel. Joe finds civil service life agreeable enough but, as a published novelist, treats his temporary career with a becoming lack of gravity. His immediate superior and friend of long standing, Robert (seen briefly in the earlier novel as an Oxford don), is a more valued and effective official but, like his protégé, seeks a career as a writer and thus equally detached from the man-of-the-world power inside the department. These centre upon a Dr Chubb, seconded from another ministry ostensibly to help conduct a survey into the potential of two types of secret weapon but also, it is generally believed, to act as a Fifth Column for those seeking to supplant the section's unwelcome head, Sir Francis Plumer. Chubb's transparent self-seeking, name-dropping and willingness to prove, in the end no match for the tactical skills of his new colleagues.

The Whitehall scenes are cunningly interwoven with others focusing on the private lives of the two male protagonists. Now responsible, if not yet respectable, middle-aged men, they review their still unnumbered affairs and their previous disastrous affairs and once more edge cautiously towards marriage. Robert, with the hard-drinking nymphomaniac Julia, mistress of Wladislaw, a rich Polish City man, and the unruly with his pre-war girl-friend Myrtle, a central character in *Scenes from Provincial Life*. Eight years on (the novel is set in 1946-47) she is a successful commercial artist and married to Haxby, Joe's one-time rival still serving with the Army abroad. Reflecting on the metropolis habit of proposing marriage when "one or both parties already had a spouse", Joe rejects the "general convention, that a man shall propose marriage to a woman before going to bed with her. . . . How much nicer it would be, I had always thought, how much more graceful and profound a compliment to propose after. Through the scenes which follow, set in such contrasting locales as Joe's seedy Pimlico flat, the dining-room of the Carlos Hotel (in Connaught Place?) and the flat-inhabited plissima of Euston Station, Joe, in ironic counterpoint to his situation in *Scenes from Provincial Life* (in which he successfully dodges Myrtle's attempt to bring him to the altar) pursues the relationship to its unhappy outcome.

Robert's affair is no more satisfactory. Even his penchant for lost

souls is overborne by self-preservation as Julia careers on through an attempted seduction of Joe at her Dolphin Square flat, a tempestuous scene with Wladislaw (who "gave us a glimpse of a passion more sustained, more obsessive and more active than anything we had ever felt"), towards involvement with Plumer's son. In the end, everything is much as it was at the beginning.

The acknowledged model for Robert in *Scenes from Metropolis Life* and its companion pieces is William Cooper's friend and civil service colleague C. P. Snow. Both writers cover a certain degree of common ground in their novels, notably the workings of the upper echelons of the public service and the difficulties met by intelligent men in establishing enduring relationships with women. Their approach to their material, however, could scarcely be more different, a contrast which *Scenes from Metropolis Life* piquantly illuminates. Robert's novels, claims Joe, depend upon "a kind of romantic and dramatic power", his own upon a kind of humour and wit. Yet in the present novel, the chromaticism of tone, reflecting Cooper's fledgling irony and his ultimately self-dramatic attitude to the world of action, eloquently undermines its narrator's presentation of his colleague as more artist than man of affairs; while the slightly Laurel-and-Hardy air about the relationship between the two men both reinforces this and yet defrosts it with the glow of real affection. William Cooper is a very good-natured writer as well as being a very clever one.

Good nature permeates *Scenes from Metropolis Life* and its companions. One might perhaps seek its origins in what used to be thought of as a uniquely English distaste for the striking of extreme attitudes — "the peculiar kind of self-concern that always seemed to go with the deliberate making of moral choices". As Joe muses in the later *Scenes from Married Life*. In the same novel he looks back on the occasion when, at a party, he met his future wife:

"This is the right one for me. . . . I remembered that statement which had expressed for me the poetic climax in human experience, falling in love. The fact of the matter was that, utterly flat as the statement was, I still had nothing whatsoever to add to it."

Here, perhaps, is the voice of Cooper the precursor, firm in his Northern (he was born and brought up in Crewe) rejection of the intellectual and literary excesses of NW3. Yet, as *Scenes from Metropolis Life* vividly demonstrates, this is far from being the whole story. There is another side to Cooper (Joe Linn), candidly hedonistic and anti-gallantry: the pleasures of bed, board and bank account are given due weight. Dinner, at the Carlos, for example, provokes in Joe the reflection that:

"A born aristocrat can have no idea of the innocent pleasure that going up in the world gives to people. . . . We sat there, not necessarily remembering where we had come from, but very definitely observing where we had got to, and feeling a modest satisfaction."

Of course, all this is something of a tease, but even so Arnold Bennett might well have felt at home at this particular table.

*Scenes from Metropolis Life* is steeped in this kind of engaging worldliness, with the narrator equally ready to turn his sardonic eye upon himself as on others. Cooper is a master of the sly comic aside, of the metaphorical question, as he is at buttonholing the reader with sea-green anecdote. Such disarming comedy misdirection, but all but the slightest critical arrow, but such archery perhaps seek to serve under the banner of Don Quixote rather than that of Sancho Panza. At one point in the novel, Joe declares: "I want to speak the truth, laughing. I'll do it or die in the attempt!" William Cooper, who followed the precept pretty well, both in this present highly entertaining and perceptive novel and subsequently

# A dream in decline

David Montrose

JOHN GARDNER

Mickelsson's Ghosts  
566pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.  
0 436 1725 X

Had the late John Gardner been a less accomplished craftsman, *Mickelsson's Ghosts* might have been more an anthology of literary genres than a homogeneous work of fiction. At bottom another examination of a middle-aged American at the end of his rope, it also contains elements of the campus novel, murder mystery, and ghost story. These narrative strands are woven into a compelling novel that is always more than the sum of its (rather conventional) parts.

In his preface, Gardner acknowledges a debt to John Updike and Joyce Carol Oates. Oates is probably influential only insofar as the academic manoeuvrings on the sidelines of *Mickelsson's Ghosts* resemble those chronicled in the linked stories of *The Hungry Ghosts*; the bow Updike recognizes, more importantly, the similarities between Peter Mickelsson and Rabbit Angstrom. Even more, though, Gardner's protagonist is a Bellows figure, particularly reminiscent of Tommy Wilhelm from *Seize the Day* and the eponymous hero of Herzog, once a full Professor of Philosophy in the Ivy League, Mickelsson now from fashion — after a breakdown and a fall from the State University of New York. He is estranged from his wife and children, whom he supports at a monthly rate of one thousand dollars. Moreover, he owes the IRS three years' back-tax, with additional fines and penalties mounting daily. Little wonder that the opening chapter finds him, nearly broke, with a crummy apartment and a rattlesnake Chavy. To crown everything, Mickelsson has real heart troubles as well as metaphorical ones.

Succumbing to a Thoreau-like dream of rural replenishment, Mickelsson suspects that he is a failed writer; his house is broken into nothing is stolen. Creating a deployment of red herrings, which matters seem about to be resolved, it is implausibly, it is inevitably true that the cause is a mistaken identity.

In the end, Gardner nearly makes narrative strange only Mickelsson's fate remains unresolved. He escapes the legal consequences of having committed a murder, but he makes of his freedom? The "ideology" shaping human existence unifies the novel's separate strands of Mickelsson's college, late security, easy answers, more somebody to blame. "Certain" character, including Laver, the life through "one" Mickelsson has his Nietzschean philosophy, Jessica's Mormonism, a belief in UFOs, than presiding a direct engagement (rejecting all ideology) with the world's complexity. Mickelsson had vainly tried to he'd hoped might be Eden's, but recognizes the need for code words "to read the world as meaningful." The trick is for the individual to discover a strategy that may be against bleak reality. Mickelsson's flight — a mere evasion — is Donnie's success in finding a way through Christianity. Toward the end of the novel, having been forced to destroy his improvements to a farmhouse, Mickelsson faces a choice between reconstructing and leaving for a different code that will pattern on class. He chooses marriage to Jessica; yet the paragraph suggests that she might be another false trail.

John Gardner is known mainly as author of *Granddaddy*, a retelling of the Beowulf legend from the modern perspective. His fine work is a realistic novel — notably *October* — has attracted less attention. Unobtrusively well-written, it is absorbingly developed. *Mickelsson's Ghosts* may not match *Granddaddy*, but it certainly deserves a place alongside that novel in the canon of Gardner's work.

Mickelsson's decline is accompanied by his gradual apprehension of the farmhouse's ghosts. At first merely intuited presences, then flickers, shadows, voices, they finally appear, two-thirds of the way through the novel re-enacting events that preceded their violent deaths. Manifestations become more frequent as Mickelsson alights further downhill. Here, as elsewhere, Gardner keeps the reader guessing. Given Mickelsson's mental state, it would be reasonable to regard the ghosts as hallucinations; the previous occupant saw nothing in fourteen years — but there are countervailing indications that he is a "sensitive". Concurrently, sinister developments are taking place on the periphery: rumours of witchcraft and UFOs, mysterious trucks — unmarked, without lights — on the mountain roads after dark, gruesome murders in which a shadowy, perhaps non-existent, sect of Mormon fanatics may be implicated.

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"Sure he has, but who wants discipline from a Chandler novel? What I want is sentimental, wozzness and corny dialogue — a sense of injury that the world is bad, but a compensating delight in the language can't reproduce that with just a regular supply of hot-shot similes and a plot, this as sweetly uncomplicated as a drink in his fist."



# Manoeuvres of management

Katharine Worth

ANN SADDLEMYER (Editor)

Theatre Business: The Correspondence of the first Abbey Theatre Directors: William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory and J. M. Synge

330pp. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe. £15.  
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"How can we make them understand that The Playboy which they hate is fine art and that The Dressmaker which they like is nothing?" Yeats's exasperated enquiry of Synge, shortly before the latter's death, typifies the questions about audiences, plays and actors that run through the three-cornered correspondence among Yeats, Synge and Lady Gregory which Ann Saddlemyer has edited under the title *Theatre Business*. The reference is to Yeats's "curse on plays" that have to be set up in fifty ways... *Theatre Business*, management of men? The difficulties are made very clear in this correspondence: one sympathises with Yeats in his ultimatum of 1907: "We must have a change somehow, or we shall all be worn out." The fascination is clear too. The selection contains much familiar material from existing collections (some is new and there are useful corrections of past datings). It is given distinction by the fact that it is put together with a finesse which adds to our knowledge of the subject and stimulates new interest in the oft-told tale of the Abbey Theatre's beginnings. Copious and skilful footnotes introduce unexpected links in the chain of thought and give a sense of the "encircling activities" which continued for all three correspondents outside their theatre work, amazing as it seems that they could find time for anything but that demanding monster.

Letters to and from Synge were chosen as the "controlling pattern" for this edition, as Ann Saddlemyer explains, because of plans for publication of larger collections of letters of all three. Yeats would probably have agreed about this; it was, he said, "the coming of the unclassifiable, uncontrollable, capricious, uncompromising genius of J. M. Synge that altered the direction of the movement and made it individual, critical, and combative." The selection has a purposeful shape: it begins with Yeats's letter of 1897 to Synge in Paris, points to a climax in the stormy, golden years from the opening of the Abbey Theatre in December 1904 and ends in March 1909 when Synge died, leaving the said link brilliantly recorded by Lady Gregory: "That sudden silence is so awful. Yesterday you could have asked him his wishes and heard his thoughts - today, nothing." The reader feels something of the same sense of loss when the third

voice falls silent and the interchange of remarkable energies comes to its premature end (Synge was only thirty-seven when he died.)

The letters as arranged and annotated by Ann Saddlemyer present an engrossing double drama. First, the drama of the theatre's development: the getting of patents and subsidies; the manoeuvring and negotiating with Miss Horniman, munificent but often resented patron, who practised what she called "diplomatic sulking"; the hardest of all, the "management of men" - for the actors (men and women) contributed their share to the problems presented by the temperamental company. The most trivial as well as the important business kept coming back to the writer-directors. There was a deep resistance in the company to the idea of professionalism and to discipline ("Coercion has never been a success in Ireland," said Lady Gregory). A group of nationalist members seceded rather than turn professional. They shared with the majority of audiences a preference for easy-to-understand patriotic drama. The editor spares us long repeats of the *Playboy* story, the most notorious (and sufficiently rehearsed) illustration of the audiences' failure to appreciate "fine art", giving us instead more unusual extracts which show similar patterns of response outside Dublin, in England and Scotland as well as in rural Ireland. "The country towns are mainly unimpaired," Yeats writes to Synge, on the detached, analytical note all three were able to maintain even in the heat of the day, "but can sometimes be intoxicated

into a state of humanity by some religious or political propagandist body, the only kind of intellectual excitement they have got used to." The trio develop a special language for their business talk. "Safe towns", for instance, were places where the company on tour might count on a decent reception (£41 in a good night at Glasgow or fifty-two copies sold at *Riders to the Sea*). The letters show Synge becoming the expert on the touring side, sending back to the other two (slightly different) accounts of experiences on the road, from the size of the takings to acrimonious interchanges with Miss Horniman who thought William Fay quite unsuited to managing the company.

The three playwrights come to agree with her. Their letters to each other on this issue interestingly show the different personalities in their different ways, with hesitations, contradictions and U-turns, all arriving at the same conclusion: the Fays must go. None doubted that the two brothers had genius: Frank Fay, though strange, even mad; some thought, was their supreme verse speaker and only teacher at the art; an expertise vital for Yeats's plays. W. G. Fay was an essential force in the peasant comedies and folk-drama on which the fame of the company most solidly rested. He worked hard and at managing the company but was unpopular with the actors and unreliable as a writer. Yeats's experience with an "outside" actress, Miss Daragh, in 1906, Yeats concluded that until then Fay had no idea of what a rehearsal really was. The perennial problem throughout the

correspondence is the question whether to hand over the management to someone from outside - cool, sophisticated and probably English - who would know how to keep proper accounts, see to the signing of cheques (a great headache, this) and above all handle the actors. One feels rather sorry for those brought in, like Ben Iden Payne, to impose commonplace business methods on this stormy Eden which was regularly agitated by crises of conscience or temperament and "epidemics of love-making". They did not stay for long: the off-stage drama proved too much for them, though it seems to have fed the imagination of the playwrights, who take sides in their letters with a certain gusto, despite complaints about the invasive "business" (Lady Gregory warns that there will be no plays to put on the following season if the writers have to keep at the managing).

Along with the theatre story a drama of personalities unfolds with steadily increasing interest as in an epistolary novel, where, once we have got to know the characters, we become ever more curious to see what each of them will make of new turns in the plot. All three write with accomplished ease but often in the underhand which makes letters lively; they show no care for effect (nor spelling, which is quite idiosyncratic) but are always to the point and remarkably frank. Formally of address is retained to the end; it is always Lady Gregory and Mr Synge, but no holds are barred. Lady Gregory has no hesitation in telling Synge that Yeats is the first among them and the reason for the theatre to exist. At other

times, as on the vexed question of international, she is at one with Yeats in preferring to keep it Irish (the Continental model). Synge remains the most reserved; as Ann Saddlemyer says, the other two "were never individuals". They sometimes speak critically of him. Lady Gregory with William Fay caused by Miss O'Neill coming late to rehearsals "insignations" with Synge who felt love affairs began. Lady Gregory sometimes tackles him, as when she protests against Miss Horniman's claims on her rights to the plays: "these plays were our own children".

Through all the changes of parties, clashes and differences of view there is a thread of understanding and shared faith. They all had, says Yeats, the excitement of the artist, but they knew the value of each other's work. Whatever happened, they retained their belief in the theatre they had created. The last letter written by the dying Synge to Yeats asks him to send his papers if anything should go wrong with the operations: "I do not want my good things destroyed, or my last things printed rashly." He knew his papers could rely on him for the last. Yeats's reply, his final letter, is a moving words in the letters where he laments the loss of a rare being for whom one did not have to "restrain" one's mind.

[Spenser] transmuted his brazen world and delivered a golden one".

Henry sweeps all the noise behind him, except two women and a few fowls. Such exceptions, however, are not to be despised in the world of Shakespeare's England. Not a Bradbrook is led astray by a sympathetic, almost always shrewd, good sense rare in academic criticism. There is no need for an unconditional identification with Falstaff; indeed there is no possibility of it; for the virtue of Shakespeare is to present many incompatible but reconciled, but harmonized. At all times, as in this essay, her writings on Shakespeare are informed by a lively sense of the plays as plays, and in the introduction she has sharp things (in both senses of the word) to say about recent developments in the theatre.

"What Shakespeare did to Chaucer's *Troilus* and *Crisyde* (1958) is something of a classic (though perhaps the contrast is a little sharply drawn). Exaggerating Criseyde's initial innocence about which Chaucer is so characteristically slippery, Bradbrook, like most critics, is too severe on *Cressida*, too readily accepting the dog-fox *Ulysses* evaluation; there is a tolerance of bawdy jesting does not of itself show uncharitableness, as Helen Rosalind and Portia demonstrate. While the great love-scene rises, at somewhat, above the prevailing squalor (nor should we forget the squalor of *Troilus* and *Crisyde*), Bradbrook's introduction to the play is a masterpiece of the kind of wit that Chaucer did to Chaucer's *Troilus* and *Crisyde* (1958) is something of a classic (though perhaps the contrast is a little sharply drawn). 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## to the editor

## America and the Vietnam War

Sir, - Others may well write to correct some of the glib misrepresentations with which Edward Luttwak saw fit to cram his review of Henry Kissinger's second volume of memoirs (October 15); my purpose is solely to contradict a myth which I find from Mr Luttwak's review and too many other such pieces, is rapidly overtaking the truth about American opposition to the war in Vietnam.

It is indeed true that among the many vocal critics of that war, and of America's participation in it, were some who were as silly as they were noisy; but supporters of participation were not all level-headed, well-informed and well-intentioned either. It is a travesty to suggest that the general opposition to the war among the young and the liberal and the realistic, which grew steadily from 1964 onwards, was caused by a belief that "the Viet Cong was an autonomous entity, dedicated to national liberation" or that the Khmer Rouge was "an improvement on Lon Nol's regime" or that "Hanoi's rulers" were "men of benevolent temper".

Looking back, it seems to me that the anti-war movement was powered by three chief forces. First, there was the understandable reluctance of young Americans to be drafted for service in a war where casualties were extremely high for a cause which was never convincingly justified to them. They did not believe that "the worthy aim of resisting Hanoi's imperialism" was worthy of the sacrifices they were being asked to make; and who dare, today, pretend that they were wrong? I thought then, and I think now, that the United States had no good reason to involve herself in the wars of Indo-China, and that, on the contrary, she sacrificed numerous really important interests to that involvement. This view of the case was widespread at the time, and is so today; if Mr Luttwak wishes to be taken seriously, he would be well-advised to address himself to this point, rather than to sneer at Richard Falk and Harrison Salisbury.

A second, even more universal ground for opposing the war was its extreme cruelty and destructiveness. It seemed that nothing could be worse for the people of Indo-China than admit that they did not remember any opponents of the war predicting that the end of American intervention would not

mean the end of the war, which still drags on miserably in Cambodia today; but the supporters of the domino theory did not make this prediction either (very much the contrary); and I remain convinced that the cessation of American bombing and shooting was an absolute good, whatever may have happened since Richard Nixon's last orgy of destruction over Hanoi at Christmas, 1972.

Finally, opposition to the war was strengthened by the mingled imbecility and mendacity of the Johnson and Nixon administrations. Even before Watergate many, perhaps most Americans found it impossible to believe a word the administration said about Vietnam, so innumerable had been the lies and the over-sanguine statements of earlier years. This was the significance of Cambodia. It seemed that a small weak country which had been attempting, with desperate skill, for years and years to spare itself the horrors which were swallowing up the rest of Indo-China had been covertly sacrificed to the genocidal strategy of the American high command without the consent or knowledge of the American people. This again is a point which Mr Luttwak ought to have discussed, rather than accusing William Shawcross of unspecified distortions in his book on Cambodia.

I believe the above account of American motives for opposing the intervention in Vietnam to be factual. Instead Mr Luttwak offers a picture of a worthy and rational policy sabotaged by deluded and deceiving academics, journalists and politicians. I am sure I do not need to explain why I want this fantasy to be strangled in its cradle.

HUGH BROGAN,  
Department of History, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester.

## 'Edmund Ironside'

Sir, - In kindly incorporating a correction I requested in my letter of October 8, you were inadvertently led into omitting a necessary sentence from it. The second paragraph should end: "My reasons for regarding 1595-9 as likely limits for the composition of *Edmund Ironside* are simple: it appears to echo *Richard II* (generally dated 1595) and its subject is English history (banned in 1599)".

MacD, P. Jackson (Letters, Sept. 10) gently deplores the lack of "hard evidence" for the date of the anonymous play's composition. May I

bow out of this correspondence with the offer of a small scrap of it? Canute, in defeat, speaks of his vanquished army in these terms (lines 1069-73): I would not doubt to conquer all the world in shorter time [sic] Alexander did But all my Daines are Dragganochios And I account to be the general of such A focke of ferefull runawales. Braggadochio is, of course, a character in *The Faerie Queene*. Book 2, first published in 1590. On the authority of the OED, Spenser invented the name, which was later to become a common noun. The writer of *Ironside* was clearly familiar with Spenser's character and expected his audience to be so too. This seems to be strong - some may even think conclusive - evidence that the play was not written before 1590.

RICHARD PROUDFOOT,  
Department of English, King's College London, Strand, London WC2.

## 'Reference and Essence'

Sir, - The questions raised by Christopher Peacocke (in his review of Nathan U. Salmon's book *Reference and Essence*, October 8) can be accommodated within standard model theory of modal logic. Suppose that ships are made from a hundred planks, and two ships are distinct if they differ by more than ten planks. Then there is a 1-model as in Cresswell and Hughes, *An Introduction to modal logic*, containing, among other things, World  $W_1$  in which a ship,  $x$ , is made of planks 1 to 100;  $W_2$  in which  $x$  is made of planks 7 to 106;  $W_3$  in which  $x$  is made of planks 13 to 112;  $W_4$  in which a ship,  $y$ , is made of planks 13 to 112, and  $y$  is not  $x$ .

$W_1$  and  $W_2$  are possible relative to  $W_3$ ;  $W_3$  is possible relative to  $W_4$  but not relative to  $W_1$ ;  $W_4$  and  $W_2$  are exactly similar;  $x$  and  $y$  may even both have the same name, but they are distinct. There is no paradox, because there is no world relative to which  $W_3$  and  $W_4$  are both possible.

This modal theory does, quite properly, assign truth values only to propositions framed with reference to some particular world, and we are indeed thinking of  $W_1$  as the actual world. But if the question is raised

what ships in what worlds are identical to what other ships in what other worlds, the answer is clear:  $x$  is the same in worlds  $W_1$ ,  $W_2$  and  $W_3$ , and  $y$  in  $W_3$  and  $W_4$ . If everything is subordinated to a world  $W_3$  in which there are no ships, but only a wistful Henry VIII and a lot of planks, then we may have either (a)  $W_1$ ,  $W_2$  and  $W_3$ , but not  $W_4$ , are possible relative to  $W_3$ , or (b)  $W_1$ ,  $W_2$  and  $W_4$ , but not  $W_3$ , are possible relative to  $W_3$ . We would probably want to say (a) if the king dreamed of commissioning a ship in the knowledge just that there were enough planks around, and (b) if he were stimulated to the idea by the particular sight of planks 1 to 100.

Formal logic and semantics must be kept at the service of what we actually want to say, although they may help us clarify and develop what we want to say. It was Kripke's hard thinking about how his own model theory is to be interpreted as a framework for what we want to say that started all the fuss. Whether we should want to say the sort of things he does or not, we must surely accept that a loose picture, too far divorced from model theory, of possible worlds as a sort of actual continuum of foreign worlds in a giant universe, can only lead to confusion.

A. J. MCISAAC,  
5a Mackay Road, London SW4.

## Heinrich Leo

Sir, - In his review of Peter Oanz's critical edition of Burckhardt's *Reflections on World History* (October 8), Hugh Trevor-Roper is mistaken in supposing that Heinrich Leo was "Rankke's prize pupil". On the contrary, Leo never studied under Rankke, but was a pupil of Hegel; in 1828 he engaged in a furious dispute with Rankke, chiefly over the interpretation of Machiavelli. Moreover, Burckhardt quotes Leo's famous remark about "den frischen, fröhlichen Krieg" (to 344 of the Oanz edition) in a favourable context; Hugh Trevor-Roper implies otherwise; inadvertently, I am sure.

DANIEL JOHNSON,  
Department of History, Queen Mary College, London.

## The Arden 'Hamlet'

Sir, - In James Fenton's brilliant article on the Arden Hamlet

(September 17), he reveals that he did not know what any good plain cook, countrywoman or poultryer's boy could have told him - that pigeon's liver, do, indeed, lack gall, and that it did not require anything so fine as the *Larousse Gastronomique* to find that out: "It needs no ghost, my Lord, come from the grave / To tell us this," say the imaginings of Dr Anne Pasternak Slater, whose doctoral thesis may, of course, have been on vegetarianism.

To turn to Florio and the fennel: for one thing, had this meaning been current in his time, he might have been too "nice to mention this" as it was common knowledge that his father had been constrained to flee England "to avoid charges of gross immorality" (O. L. Dick, Editor, *Aubrey's Brief Lives*). Distinguished Italian *fianco* of his acquaintance concur in my belief that the homosexual implications of the word in modern slang are based on a supposed resemblance between the root of the plant and the human buttocks.

FREDDY HURDIS-JONES,  
35 Square Marguerite, 1040 Brussels.

Sir, - The editors and commentators do not know - eg, Furness Variorum, New Cambridge, Penguin, New Arden, your reviewer James Fenton (September 17) - what they could have learned from Milton (*Paradise Lost*, l. 581), that fennel was reputedly a favourite food of serpents. With great dramatic point (intuitively on her nerves) Ophelia hands this flower to the King, the stinging "serpent" of the archaic (l. v. 35-40). The "flattery" meaning that the Shakespearean copy homone another is far better suited to Ew's situation than to Ophelia's.

EDWARD LA COMTE,  
North Egremont, Massachusetts 01252.

## Implicit Religion

Sir, - David Martin, in his review of David Clark's *Between Pulpit and Pew* (October 15), has referred to the Consultations in Implicit Religion that are held each year at Denton Hall, near Wetherby, West Yorkshire. Readers may be interested to know that the Consultation will be on May 13-15, 1983. I should be happy to supply details both of it and of other, more specialized Consultations taking place elsewhere in the coming year.

EDWARD BAILEY,  
Winterbourne Racology, Bristol BS17 1JQ.

## Among this week's contributors

## Competitor No 93

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than November 12. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 93" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on November 19.

1 'Here I am you see, staring at a picture. I can never get by this shop without stopping. But what a thing here! By way of a boat. Do look at it. Did you ever see the like? What queer fellows your fine painters must be, to think that anybody would venture their lives in such a shapeless old cockleshell as that! And yet, here are two gentlemen stuck up in it, mightily at their ease, and looking about them at the rocks and mountains, as if they were not to be upset the next moment, which they certainly must be. I wonder where that boat was built!'

2 'These are not a whit like nature. Nature's daylight never had that colour; never was made so turbid, cloudy, stormy or cloudy, as it is laid out there under a sky of indigo; and the light is not the light of day, but the light of a stormy night, when the sea is black and the sky is red.'

3 'I am no judge of these things. I never saw the beauty of those pictures which you say are so much prized. They are a language I do not understand. I suppose there is some relation between pictures and nature which I am too ignorant to feel - just as you see what a Greek sentence stands for which means nothing to me.'

Whiner: W. A. Davenport  
Answers:

1 We'll shed along the polished ice; in games  
Confederate  
William Wordsworth, *Prelude*, book 1.

2 O'er crackling ice, o'er gulphs profound  
With nimble glide the skaters play  
O'er treacherous pleasure's flow'ry ground  
Thus lightly skim, and hie away.

Samuel Johnson, "Translation of *Roy's Verses on Skaters*", second version.

3 All the time they seemed to be skating on fathomless depths of air; so blue the ice had become; and so glassy smooth was it that they sped quicker, and quicker to the city with the white gulls circling about them and cutting in the air with their wings the very same sweep that they cut on the ice with their skates.  
Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, chapter 1.

D. M. ARMSTRONG is Challa Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney. His *Universals and Scientific Realism* was published in 1978.

DAVID BINOMAN's *Hogarth* was published last year.

T. J. BINYON is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford. His crime novel, *Swan Song*, has just been published.

J. W. BURROW is Professor of History at the University of Sussex. His *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* was published in 1981.

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DENIS DONOGHUE's most recent book is *Ferocious Alphabets*, 1981.

TERRY EAGLETON's most recent book, *Rape of Clarissa*, will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

ROBERT FOX is Reader in the History of Science at the University of Lancaster.

NORMAN GASH's books include *Sir Robert Peel*, 1972.

GEOFFREY ORSON's *Collected Poems 1963-1980* will be published shortly.

ENRIQUETA HARRIS was formerly Curator of the Photographic Collection at the Warburg Institute.

J. W. BURROW is Professor of History at the University of Sussex. His *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* was published in 1981.

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EDWARD MILLER's books include *Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change*, 1978.

JEREMY MORRAN is a lecturer at the Berkshire College of Art. He is completing a suite of etchings on the life of Ettore Bugatti.

ANDREW MOTTON's long poem *Independence* was published in 1981.

JUDIA NAWMAN is a lecturer in English at the University of Newcastle-on-Tyne.

JOHN PARRY was Professor of German at the University of Manchester from 1963 to 1978.

S. S. PRABHU's *Heine's Jewish Comedy* will be published shortly.

PETER REDBOURNE's *The Apple-Breaker* and other poems were published last year.

LEONARD SCHAPIRO's books include *Totalitarianism*, 1972.

ROBERT SKIDELSKY's *Oswald Moody* was published in 1975.

FRANCES SPALINO is the author of *Roger Fry*, 1980.

FRANK TUDOR's collection of stories *Live Ball* was published in 1978.

EUGEN WEBER's books include *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 1977.

STANLEY WELLS is the General Editor of the Oxford Shakespeare.

## Words about poetry

## Geoffrey Grigson

The following extracts are from *The Private Art: A Poetry Notebook*, to be published by Allison and Busby on November 4.

Poetry is the poem, or a part of it; nothing else, and nowhere else.

Beauty it may be the most of lines, Or careful-spaced sequences of sound. These rather are the arc where beauty shines. The temper'd soil where only her flower is found.

Substitute what term you prefer for "Beauty" - success, effect, poetry - and Hopkins is still right. Images are nothing without the sequences of sound. Try Bishop King:

But hark! My pulse, like a soft drum Beats my approach, I tell thee I come - doesn't that work, by the sequences of sound and the meet of lines, doesn't it seem wonderful, long before we have unraveled the military image and its dependence on the tactic of an "approach" towards the enemy, steeled by the low beating of the drum?

Haven't I read (in Valéry?) that perceiving is nothing without the power of making readers perceive your perception?

Poems are words drawn and held as if magically. They begin with words for a sudden experience or realization, or for a just recalled experience or realization; these first words prompt and attract new word-experiences or word-ideas, or new recalls. Self-insulated and separated from all other mental business - like Coleridge working on "Kubla Khan" before he was interrupted - the maker of the poem superintends, selects, rejects, alters, decides, improves - Milton's "very critical art of composition" - as the magnetic attraction holds and continues. The magnetic process and this working out or working up process are, or seem, at times "continguous".

The writer, the maker, is refreshed by the making, if it goes well. For the duration he has been himself alone, or not at himself, or part of himself, without interference or contamination.

In Hlomo, Tu Fu, the Song of Songs, Shakespeare, Dante, Herbert, Pope, Wordsworth, Hölderlin, Lermontov, Hugo, Whitman, Tennyson, Pasternak, Auden, and many others, we recognize in more or less degree, and among much else, the world which contained them as it contains ourselves; and for this the discovery or the exhibition of individual neurosis or psychosis is a poor exchange.

A man's poetry is his modification, his speciality, of language, to some degree or other. There is no equal risk in making it more than usually dense and making it more than usually simple. We do turn disappointed from a body of poems, however skillful or amusing or sharp, in a language which is unidiosyncratically direct.

I have always supposed a word to be a thing, no less than a rock or a bolt or a liquid. The better poets are cognizant of things in words, things symbolized by things; in which they work.

Mallarmé - the one thing we all know about him - tells impatient Degas that poems aren't made with ideas, they are made with words. But words in response to what? Symbols - of what? I suppose it is Mallarmé's devoted heresy. Mallarmé's idea of poetry, which has grandfathered too much of the ninety verse of today (American - because of the Mallarmé-Poe relationship - and Scotch, I am tempted to say). But how we could have gained from an English Mallarmé, from someone at the centre of poetry, someone, whether connected to a heresy or no, who can now be dismissed "as artificial" or "outward devices". The "real shape" of a poem "should be conceptual, or musical, or autonomous, or at least complex". A la mode. What special shape has a concept? What is a musical shape except a musical one more or less?

Perhaps Auden went too far in being unreserved, minimizing the poetic role - and writing of it with such modesty. It hasn't kept the hymns off his grave and his reputation, that is certain. They are on him now about his revisions, and about the lightness, which is to say the unpretentiousness, of some of his later poems.

I see that Samuel Daniel was attacked about revisions: And however be it well or ill What I have done, it is my own. I may Do whatsoever thereafter I will. I may pull down, raise, and reced. It is the building of my life, the fee Of Nature, all its inheritance that I Shalt leave to those which must come after me.

Has it struck you that hyenas look as nasty as they are, or as nasty as they look? As well that we have them only in the zoos.

"Mallarmé had only to inscribe a fan with *O rêverie, pour que je plonge* ... and at once the whole essence of poetry became consciously present and powerful." (Valéry, in his essay on Berthe Morisot, in *Vues*.)

Eliot, introducing translations from Valéry's writings on poetry: "The public thirst for words about poetry, and for words from poets about almost anything - in contrast to its thirst for poetry itself - seems insatiable." True, and another peculiar survival of the inherited reputation of poets; whom kings liked to have with them in the past, along with their fools, and their food-tasters, and their astrologers and their physicians.

Perhaps Auden went too far in being unreserved, minimizing the poetic role - and writing of it with such modesty. It hasn't kept the hymns off his grave and his reputation, that is certain. They are on him now about his revisions, and about the lightness, which is to say the unpretentiousness, of some of his later poems.

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The presence of "I" Coleridge thought that poetry needed egotism, in the first meaning of the presence of I, the presence of the poet in his poem. No I, and poems would be "comparatively uninteresting". He said that to censure egotism in monodies and sonnets "is about as absurd as to dislike a circle for being round".

But egotism as conceit, as self-importance, does require to be kept on a lead. It is always better to be a poet alone, and stick to poems. They are claim enough on posterity, and an ego flaunted outside them, in too many other activities, gets in the way. It is still Victor Hugo's trouble, that irrepressible multi-ego venting all over the place, often bombastically and absurdly. Hugo's egotism has induced his latest biographer to quote more sneers against him than poems by him. Of course the big sneer right at the beginning, is Coleridge's "Victor Hugo, notice that to balance the sneering at this great and so often humble and intent poet of the comers and the foregrounds of nature no quotations in praise of him as a poet are alluded in, as they might have been and should have been, from Valéry or Mallarmé, or even from the vituperation of Claudel.

"Just as he knows how to describe, or rather to create, the prodigious presence of all visible things." Valéry on Victor Hugo. How in this way he renews the old trope of Death with his scythe in the lines on Gautier, which Valéry so admired:

Le dur faucheur avec sa large lame avance, Pensif et pas à pas, vers le royaume du bled. With his long blade the hard harvester advances. Gravely and step by step, towards the remaining wheat.

"Often with him" - again Valéry on Hugo - "the development of a poem is visibly deduced from a wonderful accident of language that has occurred to his mind." But is accident the right word? A journalist (I keep my mistyping because it suggests some strange Icelandic functionary) - a journalist declares of metre and rhyme that they can now be dismissed "as artificial" or "outward devices". The "real shape" of a poem "should be conceptual, or musical, or autonomous, or at least complex". A la mode. What special shape has a concept? What is a musical shape except a musical one more or less?

less? And what is an "autonomous" shape? The "real shape" of a poem is the shape it has. Any shape of a poem is artificial, as well as real. As for complex shape, what good verse has been without complexity?

To expect poets to be "accurate" observers or describers isn't sensible. They are not taxonomists. They are special observers, they renew the familiar with eyes, with senses, of their own, in what we name their own words; but observe they do, from Sappho to Dante, from Dante even to Swinburne, Swinburne even to Eliot, and often - too often - their annotators and editors and interpreters go to work on them, not from their own sensual experience, but only from dictionaries and verbal analogies.

The *Usk in flood* When Vaughan wrote that he had seen "Eternity the other night"

Like a great ring of pure and endless light, All calm, as it were bright I know - but I am not told this by his editors - that he had been out probably

nothing, but to name a minor poet to whom one returns again and again with pleasure. He chose Campion and William Barnes; and I hope, and am fairly sure, there ran in his mind always that not so song-like poem by Campion beginning:

What fair pomp have I spied of glittering Ladies, With locks sparkled abroad, and rosy coronet On their ivory brows, track'd to the dainty thighs With robes like Amazons, blue as violet. With gold aglets adorn'd, some in a changeable Pale, with spangs wavering, taught to be moveable.

Criticism isn't independent. Taste isn't independent. Both are ruled by the triumphant conceptions or misconceptions of any period. So beware. For the long period of 260 years no one had any use for Campion. He died in 1620. Then his poems stayed in limbo, more or less, until 1889, when they were first collected, and began to be admired again for their perfections. What can happen once in that line can happen again. So look round you, Aak

Sometimes I find myself struggling with - and against - certain classic poems, for instance, with one against Gray's "Elegy", a poem so classic that in mid-Atlantic I met an American girl from Vassar, granddaughter of a Polish peasant woman and a Lithuanian coalminer, who was travelling to England on pilgrimage to Stoke Poges churchyard.

Isn't there something epicene, and complacent, in Gray's conly patronage of the eighteenth-century poor, in Gray's invention of the quotation dictionary lines? I should have disliked Gray (I think) how much am I transferring to the poem my recollection of Gray's portrait, that thin-lipped prissy youth, and the records of the way he minced? Christopher Smart - there's a character in poetry annals you can't help loving, though I won't say admiring - is credited with that description of Gray as one who "walked as if he had fouled his small-clothes and smelt it". Read that, and Gray is alive again, there he is mincing at Eton, mincing from Peterhouse to King's, mincing into the British Museum, mincing through literature.

Eliot, agreeing that a poem needs structure, that it has to be built, found in *The Deserted Village* something near perfection and in the "Elegy" only one feeble verse after another. I could agree. I could also say that to Gray on the short and simple "stanzas of the poor", Goldsmith added some extra truth, some truer indignation.

Here while the proud their long drawn pomp display, And then his *The Village* Crabbe gives the lie to Gray and the lie to Goldsmith as well - How would ye bear to draw your latest breath, Where all that's wretched paves the way for death? Stop being pastoral and evasive, stop pretending:

Up yonder hill, babble how sadly slow The bier moves winding from the vale below. There is the happy dead, from trouble free, And the glad parish pays the funeral fee.

I know, says Crabbe, and he comes nearer the classic truth about all of the human race: lazy rich, lazy poor. And then in spite of the thin lips and the mincing walk of the child majority of his poems, in spite of his patronage of the graves, I am back at Gray's "Elegy" and its reverberations

of music, the refreshment of the mind from care or irksomeness." Happiness is more the point than sorrow, which can't be helped. Barnes had sorrow in his even life, in the death of his Julia Barnes - "my astounding loss". Clare had sorrow enough and more than enough. But just as the essence of Barnes is sanity and health, so the essence of Clare is sanity, not madness. We are caught by the extraordinary end by a romantic frisson rising out of the blends of happiness and madness, love and madness, in the biography and productivity of poets; whereas the grandest art does come out of "ordinariness" in its highest power, health of mind in its greatest strength and sensibility; not from eccentricity and unbalance.

Free with his rhymes for sick, blunt, nuck, Rochester seems to exclaim in his poems *That's all, What else can be said*, like Oya in his captions. In his best there is an overtone and an undertone. His etched overtone advances, in plain particular language, without any "useless words" oppress the wearied ear, the undertone, of a slight irregularity and a slight husky dissonance, slows that plain thrust and injects insecurity and mortality, and Rochester's self-mockery, without a snivel or a grovel.

Long be it ere thou grow old, Aching, shaking, crase, cold.

Fatness to thee, false, untorgiven.







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# Great Truths of Creation

David Bindman

IAIN BAIN (Editor)

The Watercolours and Drawings of Thomas Bewick and his Workshop Apprentices  
Two volumes, 233 and 230 pp.  
Gordon Fraser Gallery, £125 the set.  
0 86092 057 7

Thomas Bewick is a classic victim of the effects of over-familiarity. We see his designs everywhere — on biscuit tins, National Trust mugs, newspaper articles on nature conservation — with the result that he has been retrospectively neutralized into a genteel proto-ecologist when he was nothing of the kind. The ubiquity of his designs was partly a consequence of the technique of wood-engraving which he perfected; this made it possible for his designs to be printed virtually without limit. Many of his blocks have still not worn out after nearly 200 years of use. His watercolours and drawings, on the other hand, are little known, but on the evidence of those magnificent produced volumes there is a case to be made for considering them in their own right. Bewick's colour, and especially that of his assistant, Robert Johnson, who died in 1796 at the age of twenty-six, can be exquisite and suggest nuances of feeling lost in the more muted medium of wood-engraving. Even so they can never displace the wood-engravings and for all their charms are rarely as rich in content as their final realizations in the *History of Quadrupeds and British Birds*.

In his excellent introduction Iain Bain gives due weight to the role of Bewick's workshop and we can now begin to see more clearly the artistic personalities of Johnson, Luke Clennell, his son Robert Bewick, and others who went from Newcastle to take the new method to an eager metropolis. Bewick never escaped from the kind of provincial workshop which took on all sorts of engraving work and as head of his own shop he often gave his name to work produced by his talented apprentices. He was almost always responsible for the preliminary drawings of the birds or animals, and probably conceived all but a few of the tailpieces, but the watercolour or final wood engraving could be by anybody in the shop. It can be difficult to tell whether a watercolour is by Bewick or by an apprentice, but the wood engravings he finished himself reveal more obviously his distinctive sensibility and

wit. In some cases, as this book reveals, the transition from the drawing to the final wood engraving can result in a complete transformation. In "Winnowing Corn in a Farmyard" a banal farmyard scene is given an added dimension by the addition of dead birds pinned to the wall of the barn; the farmyard is now filled with a seemingly infinite number of creatures, and fieldfares fly above in formation. The design of "A Roadman breaking Stones", the watercolour of which was made by Johnson, is vividly transformed by bringing forward the clump of trees from the background and hanging a bottle, presumably the reward for hard labour, from a branch above the workman.

The effect of such additions, however imperceptible, is to give a third dimension to Bewick's art which is beyond the reach of his apprentices; it becomes, especially in the tailpieces, the passionate expression of an uncompromising view of the world. Though brought up in the Church of England, Bewick's temperament was essentially radical and nonconformist. There is a strong distaste for the world in his books on animals and birds: the world of Aesop's fables is never far away. He excuses his evident delight in depicting nature because of its efficacy in drawing "the attention of youth to the Great Truths of Creation". He intersperses his attempts to "try to put life into deadskins" with what he called punning "wale-pieces of gaiety and humour" which also tend "to illustrate some truth, or point some moral".

These tailpieces are perhaps his greatest artistic achievement; at their best they are incomparable in their subtlety of observation and technique. The social reality of the landscape in the years around 1800 is never more convincingly and unsentimentally rendered than by Bewick, yet observation is never an end in itself. Though nostalgia for his childhood is a constant note in his art and writings, he is quite without the selective vision of the eighteenth-century Pastoral which makes the rugged poor appear as happy as they are virtuous. Nor on the other hand does he regret, like George Crabbe, a lost rustic Eden and recall, in the face of rural misery, "the swains, who daily labour done, / With rural games play'd down the setting sun; / Who struck with matchless force the bounding ball, / Or made the pond'rous quill obliquely fall".

Bewick's world is defined by the few miles between Newcastle, where he had his workshop, and the farm at

Cherryburn, twelve miles to the west on the south bank of the Tyne, where he was born in 1753. His father managed a colliery, and smoking chimneys often appear in the distance of Bewick's wood engravings as does the steeple of St Nicholas's Cathedral. Yet more central to his vision are the chance encounters of mortality: the gibbet and the tombstone. Like a churchyard poet Bewick often invites melancholy reflection on the shortness of life, but there is also a mordant Northumbrian edge in such images as the tombstone by moonlight, inscribed "Good Times & Bad Times & All Times gat o'er". Even tombstones are subject to mortal decay: in one tailpiece they lie broken and forgotten on the shore, cut off by the sea from a decaying church. Most of the tailpieces, however, point humorously to human folly, showing for instance a man crossing the river on an overhanging branch which surely cannot bear his weight. In "Saving the Toll" a cowman fords the river with his cow instead of paying the toll to cross the bridge; as a result he loses his hat which is worth more than the toll.

Whether consciously or not, Bewick seems intent on undermining the townsman's vision of the countryside as a refuge from reality. Beggars,

thieves and wounded soldiers populate the countryside, and he has a sharp eye for social distinctions, as in the riotous incongruous scene of a gentleman hunter asking the way of a sullen vagrant. Little boys taunt and torture animals, and this does rouse his indignation, but he tells us plainly in *British Birds* which birds are particularly good to eat, often signifying this by placing a fortunate hunter in the background. Rustic lovers never make an appearance, and his autobiography is full of discourses on the evils of illicit sex and the horror of venereal disease. He claimed that one of the reasons he disliked London was "seeing such a number of fine looking women engaged in the wretched business of *Street Walking*".

If sex has no place in Bewick's world he had no inhibitions about excretory functions; in fact he appears to revel in them: a man pees against his shadow by the boat along with two men to the water behind it, and the contents of a vat being carried by two men to the dye house are alluded to by two men relieving themselves against a pub wall. These, however, are inoffensive compared to the notorious "Pigsty Netty" which Bewick eventually felt bound to alter, but even in its

expurgated state it still shows a man, his bottom fully exposed, defecating into a pigsty, and the pencil drawing through watercolours until it was altered in the next netty. When Bewick was challenged to withdraw it by Jane he protested: "essential seriousness; perhaps, might have been as well, if I had some mark of disapprobation on those on cruelty — where a calling in on the back ground". He thought it to be read as an image of human degradation, with even a hint of recreating in disgust at man's filthiness.

Bewick's unsentimental vision is easily vitiated by insensitiveness, and we can be grateful that a presentation of his designs in the volumes does complete justice to his qualities. The reproductions are excellent; the colour bears comparison with the original and care has been taken to match the colour of the page on which they are drawn. The layout is spacious and clear and though it is of information it is also extremely pleasant to handle. I shall treasure my copy.

## Total interaction

Terry Eagleton

ARNOLD HAUSER

The Sociology of Art  
Translated by Kenneth J. Northcott  
776pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£19.95.  
0 7100 9231 8

Dialectical thought, like sincerity, is a sine qua non which means little in itself. That things should be grasped in their living development and active interrelations, that events should not be abstracted from the complex totality of which they are part: such doctrines are at once an essential corrective to empiricist myopia and by now, in a certain German tradition of thought, the merest commonplaces. Throughout the first four hundred or so pages of this mighty tome, first published in Germany in 1974, Arnold Hauser takes an extraordinarily long time to urge the dialectical indissociability of art and society, form

and content, subject and object, history and structure. Nature and culture, past and present. A well-nigh pathological drive to comprehend everything powers this relentless enterprise, unable either to slift or suggest, the work threatens to sink beneath its own encyclopedic erudition despite the fact that the translator has charitably shortened its sentences for English consumption.

"The individual and society are indivisible", and systematically "Art and society are in a state of continuous mutual dependence"; "subject and object can only be conceived and defined in conjunction with one another"; such propositions, as true and important as they are empty formal, are interspersed with sweeping historical analyses of authentically Hauserian brilliance. But whereas in Hauser's earlier work theory provided the scaffolding for a pioneering materialist history of art, the relations between the two are here injuriously inverted: *The Sociology of Art* is offered as a philosophical summa of the thirty years' labour which gave birth to its author's epochal volumes of art history, ranging that *oeuvre* to furnish fascinating illustrations of Hegelian-Marxist commonplaces.

That bygone between "Hegelian" and "Marxist" is a good deal more troubling than the authoritative tones of this global philosophizing would have us believe. The theoretical model with which Hauser works, here as elsewhere, is familiarly Hegelian-Marxist: social classes born of economic struggle and seen as history's dynamic agents, generating homogeneous forms of consciousness which in turn give rise to forms of art. It is a model critically dependent on the Hegelian notion of "mediation", not least if it is to avoid an intolerable reductionism; but Hauser tells us, rather abruptly, as early as his Preface, that he now believes the whole concept of mediation to be "fictional", and argues instead for the significance of "collective leaps" from one level to another. How far his method can without scuppering itself entirely is a question the book fails adequately to answer.

If Hauser casually undermines his own method in this way, he does so even more strikingly in another, any historical materialist theory which can cope with the social conditions of art seriously crippled from the outset. Hauser, however, vigorously opposes these two realms in violation of his own dialectical principles: social meanings and conditions are one thing, aesthetic values quite another. Ironically, it is his very Hegelian tenets which force him into this position. Hegelian Marxism

tends to approach art "genetically" in terms of its moment of production, so foregoes that attention to the historical reception of artefacts which the problem of aesthetic value might most resourcefully tackled. Hauser is admittedly aware of "reception theory", and generally enthusiastic about it; but the hesitancy which he has about his own theory prevents him from seeing that there might here be a escape route of kinds from his dogmatic dualism.

There is a third sense in which Hauser's theoretical model tends to come to grief on its own premises. For though in practice he tends to work with a Marxist notion of dialectic, he assumes the primacy of economic conditions in the shaping of culture, he does not, theoretically speaking, credit such primacy at all. For his readers, naturally, this will be evidence of his good sense; it is also, unfortunately, testimony to the whole circular nature of his theory of art, which boils down to asserting that everything interacts with everything else. Constrained to choose between Marx and Hegel, between an unconscionable materialism and an emptily circular dialectic, Hauser opt ultimately for the latter. It is for this reason that the first four hundred pages of his book produce sentences which are unexceptionable in their proportion to their uninterestingness.

The final sections of the study are devoted to updating Hauser's previous explorations in art history, to encompass the contemporary world of the mass media and the modern avant-garde. There are some remarks about the Bauhaus and incongruous an occurrence of Roger McGough. However, in Lukács in his gloomy critique of modern art is, indeed, the Hauser's problem: he dismisses revolting stages as decadent, but apart from a perceptive passage on film (he worked for the film industry one point) has little to add in his lamentations for high culture of the later Frankfurt School.

The final pages of the book contain a sense of political resignation which may in fact provide a key to the book's problems. Hauser, in his Preface that he has effectively abandoned Marxism, at least as any kind of political theory, possible, he insists, to "argue Marxism as a philosophy of history, a society without being a Marxist in the politically activist sense". This is impossible to be a wholly convincing Marxist or not; it seems to be a brought Arnold Hauser into the late years beyond disillusionment about changing the world, and a overcompensatory impulse to

## UNITED STATES

PETER H. IRONS

The New Deal Lawyers  
351pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £14.60.  
0 691 04688 3

ARCHIBALD COX

Freedom of Expression  
89pp. Harvard University Press.  
£4.50 (paperback, £2.10).  
0 674 31912 5

Sooner or later we shall adopt a Bill of Rights in Britain and give the judges the awesome job of interpreting it. So the history and practice of judicial enforcement of rights in the United States is or ought to be an object of intense interest to British political scientists.

There is, on the face of it, a great gulf of time and sentiment between the Supreme Court of Chief Justice Hughes and that of Chief Justice Warren E. Burger. The handling of Roosevelt's New Deal legislation in the 1930s fixed for many British observers an image both of the Court and of judicial review as a political institution. To allow judges to invalidate the work of popularly elected Governments was undemocratic and reactionary. Nine old men, it seemed, had shaped the constitution to fit their inarticulate major premises (not knowing until they were told by Mr Justice Holmes and Professor Harold Lasswell that they had any). But in the post-war years Supreme Court judges of various political origins and degrees of ideological fervour have earned better testimonials. They have expanded the civil rights of minorities, improved the status of women, protected the privileges of criminal defendants, rejected prohibitions on abortion and contraception, defended the separation of powers against overweening Presidents, and established the most liberal regime of free speech and political action of all the Western democracies.

These two contrasting worlds of constitutional jurisprudence can be seen side by side in Peter Irons's study of the New Deal litigation of the 1930s and Archibald Cox's survey of the Court's decisions in the 1970s on issues involving the First Amendment guarantee of free expression. As to the change, in orientation from the old world to the new there are well-known social scientific explanations. The Supreme Court follows the election returns. As with time saved the nina justices from the consequences of their attachment to Herbert Spencer's Social Statics. A constitutional revolution in 1939 transformed the Court's attitude to judicial review; and so on. And yet to read these two books together is to be reminded of the continuities and similarities rather than the differences between the judicial controversies of the 1930s and those of the post-war period.

Irons provides a detailed step-by-step account of the legal issues faced by three of the major New Deal agencies: the National Recovery Administration, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the National Labor Relations Board. Each in turn experienced with the Supreme Court. Despite the extremity of the economic situation it was inevitable that the activities of the regulatory agencies would run up against limitations set by the existing understandings of the due process and commerce clauses. Restriction of production, licensing, price fixing, regulation of contracts and of the labour market were bound to be attacked as attempts by the Federal Government and Congress to exceed their powers to levy taxation and to regulate inter-state commerce.

The major Supreme Court decisions in the *major New Deal cases*, *Schechter Poultry Corp. v. United States*, *NLRB v. Jones & Laughlin Steel Corp.* and *NLRB v. Cardozo*, which invalidated New Deal legislation, turned in various degrees on three points. Could the various agencies regulating freedom of contract, employment and production be reconciled with the liberty guaranteed by the Fifth and

Fourteenth Amendments? Second, could Congress, consistently with the separation of powers, delegate to executive officers an undefined power to draft rules and codes having legislative effect? Third, could the power of Congress to regulate commerce between the states be invoked to control industrial and agricultural processes inside the various states?

The last was perhaps the most recalcitrant issue. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration, for example, wanted to license milk production. The AAA lawyers argued that unstabilized milk markets affected the price of butter. Butter in turn moved extensively in inter-state commerce. Therefore the federal government had power by licensing to control abuses and remove conditions that adversely affected inter-state commerce in butter. At first a majority of the Court rejected such arguments, and the whole structure of the New Deal seemed threatened. In the end, after the *West Coast Hotel* and *Jones and Laughlin Steel* cases, both the due process and commerce clause barriers to regulation crumbled. But despite popular mythology it was not by a dialectical or revolutionary leap into a new constitutional era. Possibly the *Zeligs* got into Mr Justice Roberts, but the Court had frequently been divided and by 1937 the majority had been persuaded to fashion an interpretation of the commerce clause that upheld the National Labor Relations Act by conceding to Congress a right to control industrial relations and regulate strikes on the supposition that they might impede the free flow of commerce between the States.

In so doing the Hughes Court forged a weapon which helped thirty years later to sustain important sections of the Federal Civil Rights legislation of 1964. Congress was able to act under the commerce clause to attack racially segregated facilities inside a state that might impede inter-state travel or trade. It was involved with the flow of goods across state lines. Moreover in the *Carolee Products* case the Hughes court had suggested the possibility that

## Shaping the constitution

Geoffrey Marshall

cases involving the restriction of electoral and First Amendment freedoms might require a different approach from those that involved the restriction of entrepreneurial and economic liberties. So the Court described by Professor Cox can be seen to have followed in some degree signposts erected by its predecessor. Nothing in judicial argument is ever entirely new.

The protection of freedom of speech and expression on which Cox's short study concentrates raises a number of questions. What is "speech"? Are some forms of non-speech conduct protected if they communicate beliefs or ideas? Under what circumstances can the interests of the community in protecting morality, and securing privacy or public order, justify restricting what can be said, printed, published or broadcast? In the 1960s the Warren Court extended the boundaries of free expression in a number of directions. It established the right of American citizens to defame politicians, to enjoy pornography, to carry sexually explicit epithets on their clothing, to abuse the flag, and (if the mood should take them) to make obscene threats to police officers. In the 1970s freedom went on broadening down from precedent to precedent.

In one or two areas the judges appointed by Richard Nixon have moved more cautiously. In *F.C.C. v. Pacifica Foundation* they failed to extend constitutional protection to a twelve-minute broadcast of a recital entitled "Filthy Words". In *Young v. American Mini Theatres* they upheld a local ordinance regulating the siting of adult theatres and book stores. Mr Justice Stevens asserting that "Few of us would march our sons and daughters off to war to preserve the citizen's right to see Specified Sexual Activities exhibited in the theatres of our choice." In defamation suits the Warren Court's extensions of the public officer doctrine seems to have been halted. In *Snepp v. U.S.*, an ex-employee of the CIA was restrained from publishing an account of the agency's activities in breach of his contract of employment.

On the other hand the Burger Court has discovered some new categories of speech and communication eligible for protection. Political campaign expenditure by individuals, groups and corporations has been immunized from regulation imposed by Federal Election Campaign contribution legislation of 1974. In addition a new category of communication has been uncovered, namely "commercial speech". Commercial speech (better known perhaps as advertising) raises complex philosophical issues. It comprises a mixture of communicative propositions. Some indicate a willingness to engage in commercial transactions. Others describe the alleged properties of objects or persons. In matters of politics, morality and religion liberals from John Stuart Mill onwards have supposed it wrong to suppress assertions on the ground of alleged falsity or perniciousness of content, holding truth to be irrelevant or at least many-sided, and best established by the fligging of a free market in ideas.

In relation to economic or entrepreneurial speech however, radicals tend to become regulators and regulators tend to become radicals. The Supreme Court has nevertheless concluded that the right of various professional groups such as lawyers, pharmacists and dentists to advertise (ie, to communicate ideas and opinions about the nature and availability of their services) is a part or segment of the right to free speech.

Other segments or implications of the free speech doctrine have been discovered, some of them more loosely related to it, perhaps by the notion that they may be preconditions of, or encouragements to the free exchange of ideas. Among these are the right of access to information held by government, the right to privacy or immunity from intrusion and the privilege of journalists to obstruct the course of justice in the interest of keeping open the supply of information.

What seems to be missing from the judicial development of these various rights and immunities is a satisfying body of theory that relates one to another and explains the limits of their

application. In some of the cases there is a suggestion that forms of expression can be divided into pure or first-class speech and less pure second-class speech. The latter may enjoy less protection and its content be regulated if regulation is directly related to some substantial governmental interest and is not more extensive than is required to secure that interest. Purer and higher class speech, it is implied, deserves a higher degree of protection. The allocation of the many and varied forms of expressive conduct to these categories however is a central pose which the last ten years of First Amendment cases have not done much to resolve.

About the work of the present-day Court Cox is not very complimentary, seeing it as unduly "pragmatic and particularistic". There have been, he suggests, too many individual and dissenting opinions and in some areas too little effort to support decisions by reference to the existing body of established law. One explanation offered for this is "the breaking down of an older body of law under the pressures of legal positivism and legal realism". This seems implausible since both positivism and realism have been pressing on American judges and jurists for most of the present century and it seems odd to suppose that they have only at this date contrived to fragment the jurisprudence of the Burger Court. Cox however has another explanation that seems nearer to the bone. It is the increasing number and rapid turnover of law clerks writing draft opinions for the Justices. "A heroic effort would be required", Cox says, to impart unity of philosophy and authority to the law clerks' drafts. This suggests two conclusions. First that the law clerks have served their masters badly (to the point of the testimony of Messrs Armstrong and Woodward in *The Brethren* is to be believed — of clerical torture). Second, that the present bench must be the feeblest in the history of the United States. The task of imposing unity on the penmanship of newly graduated pragmatists from the Law Schools would not have seemed unbearably heroic to Justices Hughes, Stone, Brandeis or Frankfurter.

Two things remain to be said on the importance of this study. First, scholars will find an expanded canon of necessary texts for approaching the period. Figures like Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Rousseau, Franklin, Edwards and Paine retain their customary prominence. However, existing cases are also made for including such works as Fenelon's *Télémaque*, Marmontel's *Moral Tales*, Salomon Gessner's *The Death of Abel* and, in America, McCrea, William Dunlap's *André*, Mary Collier's *The Death of Cain* and Stephen Burroughs's *Memoirs*. Second, *Prodigals and Pilgrims* is a model of restraint in its use of Freudian and archetypal paradigms. With a subject that lends itself readily to the apparatus of psychohistory, Professor Filigelman always comes to grips first and last with the historical character of his data. The result is a book that will be useful to many and for years to come.

The recent publication of the biography of Martin Luther King, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, by Stephen B. Oates (1980pp. Search Press. £12.50, 0 85532 520 8) completes a quartet of lives of Americans profoundly affected by the moral paradox of slavery and racial oppression in a land based on the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, as the author says in his preface. The slave leader Nat Turner, John Brown and Abraham Lincoln were the subjects of the earlier biographies. Oates thinks that "King, though struggling in a subsequent century, was both historically and symbolically linked to these figures of the Civil War era".

## A final flowering

Enriqueta Harris

EDWARD J. SULLIVAN and NINA A. MALLORY

Painting in Spain 1650-1700 from North American Collections  
182pp. with illustrations.  
Guildford: Princeton University Press. £23.  
0 691 03992 5

Like many recent exhibition catalogues, this is not a book to be carried in the hand and consulted in front of the originals: in every sense it is a solid volume, to be studied at leisure, a handbook for the student of seventeenth-century Spanish painting. The exhibition, held this year in the Princeton Art Museum and the Institute of Fine Arts, Detroit, followed an important but little publicized show in Seville, *La Época de Murillo* (catalogue by E. Valdes Leal and J. M. Serrera) and will in turn be followed by major exhibitions in Madrid and London to celebrate the third century of Murillo's death. In the catalogue under review, Murillo is also the central figure, by far the best-known artist of the period outside Spain, represented by eight undisputed canvases.

The idea of bringing together works from Madrid and Seville, the two chief centres of painting in the period, was both original and rewarding. Even in Spain it would be hard to find under

one roof such a range of examples of both schools. The forty-seven paintings from public and private collections in the United States and Canada appear mostly to have come there in recent years, but their provenance is not always documented, presumably for lack of information. Among the dozen illustrations of *desiderata*, paintings presumably not available for the exhibition, is Murillo's early "Self-Portrait", now in an unnamed private collection and last recorded in London in 1904.

The catalogue entries and the full-page plates that follow are arranged in alphabetical order of artist, rather than by schools, and range from the flower painter Juan de Arellano to Valdes Leal and Zurbarán. Although they died after 1650, belong to an earlier age and are not included. There are some examples of portraiture, still-life and genre, but there is a marked preponderance of religious subjects, from both Seville and Madrid, among them one work by the Neapolitan Luca Giordano, included presumably because he spent the last years of the century at the Spanish court.

Apart from the Murillos, the most important paintings here are by Claudio Coello, notably a "St Joseph and the Christ Child" (Toledo) reproduced in colour, and those by Valdes Leal, including a rare "Portrait of an Ecclesiastic" (Amherst). Even more rare is a "Flight into Egypt" (Saragosa) signed "Peregrino 1658". But

for the signature it would be hard to believe that this is by the former slave and assistant of Velázquez. There are some disputed or disputable attributions. The "Portrait of a Cavalier" (Ottawa), for instance, is here accepted as by Murillo, although it is thought by Diego Angulo to be probably by Claudio Coello. An impressive "Annunciation" (Williams Leal) is catalogued as anonymous Moreno, a little-known painter of the school of Madrid, who is here represented by a resigned work, "Flight into Egypt" (Minneapolis). The alternative attributions of these paintings, exemplifying the similarities between the productions of Madrid and Seville at this period, often more marked than their differences.

Exceptional though it is, this collection of paintings is, of course, only a sample of the subject of the exhibition. Its organizers have not only compiled long, detailed and illustrated catalogue entries, but have also contributed illustrated, scholarly histories of painting in the second half of the seventeenth century in Madrid and Seville (by Edward J. Sullivan and Nina A. Mallory respectively); these essays will ensure that the book becomes, as they intended a standard reference work. Included also is a brief historical survey by J. E. Elliott of the troubled years of the monarchy that are the background to the last flowering of the art.

That bygone between "Hegelian" and "Marxist" is a good deal more troubling than the authoritative tones of this global philosophizing would have us believe. The theoretical model with which Hauser works, here as elsewhere, is familiarly Hegelian-Marxist: social classes born of economic struggle and seen as history's dynamic agents, generating homogeneous forms of consciousness which in turn give rise to forms of art. It is a model critically dependent on the Hegelian notion of "mediation", not least if it is to avoid an intolerable reductionism; but Hauser tells us, rather abruptly, as early as his Preface, that he now believes the whole concept of mediation to be "fictional", and argues instead for the significance of "collective leaps" from one level to another. How far his method can without scuppering itself entirely is a question the book fails adequately to answer.

If Hauser casually undermines his own method in this way, he does so even more strikingly in another, any historical materialist theory which can cope with the social conditions of art seriously crippled from the outset. Hauser, however, vigorously opposes these two realms in violation of his own dialectical principles: social meanings and conditions are one thing, aesthetic values quite another. Ironically, it is his very Hegelian tenets which force him into this position. Hegelian Marxism

## Fruits of disobedience

Robert A. Ferguson

JAY FILIGELMAN

Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800  
328pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£20.  
0 521 23719 X

The men who participated in the American Revolution knew what was soon forgotten: that their experience involved a great mental adventure beyond the actual events of the war for independence. "The war? That was no part of the Revolution," John Adams reminded Thomas Jefferson, "it was only an effect and consequence of it. The Revolution was in the minds of the people... before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington." *Prodigals and Pilgrims* is the first work in American studies to examine the fullest implications of Adams's claim. For Adams was alluding to an underlying change in the way people thought in eighteenth-century culture. *Prodigals and Pilgrims* seeks to document and explain that change. Its special focus brings a new perspective to the revolutionary and early national periods in American history.

Jay Filigelman argues that there was a larger revolution in the understanding of the nature of authority in the eighteenth century, an intellectual and emotional revolution growing out of a reconsideration of basic family relations and culminating in rejection of established patterns of authority on every level of Anglo-American society. John Locke's sensationalist epistemology, the general stress of the Enlightenment upon personal autonomy, and the Scottish common-

sense movement with its emphasis on an instinct toward happiness, all combined to place a new emphasis on the integrity of childhood as a separate and crucial stage of development. By mid-century, in Professor Filigelman's words, "patriarchal family authority was giving way to a new parental ideal characterized by a more affectionate and egalitarian relationship with children." This shift in emphasis would prove decisive for colonials breaking away from their mother country. Looka, after all, encouraged analogies between individual development and the art of government. The rhetoric of familial discord, laced with images of domestic tyranny, quickly became the *lingua franca* of the Revolution. For Thomas Paine and other pamphleteers of revolution, *Prodigals and Pilgrims* is the first work in American studies to examine the fullest implications of Adams's claim. For Adams was alluding to an underlying change in the way people thought in eighteenth-century culture. *Prodigals and Pilgrims* seeks to document and explain that change. Its special focus brings a new perspective to the revolutionary and early national periods in American history.

Anti-patriarchal ideology embraced the new pedagogy of politics and theology. In assuming that character developed entirely through sense impressions registering on the mind, Lockeian psychology drew no epistemological distinction between impressions made by fiction and those made by other experiences. Imaginative literature emerged as one more educational tool for explaining a non-coercive rational than authoritarian model of the family and, hence, one more mechanism for exploring the larger problem of liberty versus authority. In this view, it was no accident that *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the first American bestseller in 1775, fascinated American readers were fascinated by the example of Crusoe, the disobedient son who becomes his own parent by establishing a separate and successful life as a pilgrim in the New World instead of returning as a

prodigal to the Old. Nor is it surprising that last would follow fiction in the successful aftermath of the Revolution. Re-examining the iconography of George Washington, Filigelman shows how early republicans made Washington both friend and father of his country in an image that replaced patriarchy with benevolence, precept with example, and the authority of position with the standard of character. When Washington chops down his father's English cherry tree in Parson Weems's famous tale, he is "the heroic prodigal whose disobedience secures 'rather than alienates the father'".

Such a brief summary can capture the basic idea but not the richness of *Prodigals and Pilgrims*. Its power and range extend well beyond its thesis. Filigelman has a gift for showing how the truisms of his field can be extended into new avenues of analysis. For years now we have been told that cross-cultural influence necessarily reflect a borrowed context, instead of reflecting their original nature. The effective response of *Prodigals and Pilgrims* is to pass from the original publications of European texts into a careful study of American abridgments and chapbook editions. Just as frequently we have been told that intellectual influences cut across genres, disciplines and boundaries. But *Prodigals and Pilgrims* is one of very few works to accept the challenge within the statement. Political, philosophical, religious, religious, dramatic, journalistic, musical, painting, advertisements and cartoons — from the Continent as well as England and America — all contribute to a unified analysis. Perhaps most important of all, Filigelman brings vitality to the age-old assumption that the novel and America connect in a peculiar and



# Nothing but the mind

D. M. Armstrong

JOHN FOSTER

The Case for Idealism  
309pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£12.50.  
0 7100 9010 6

The Case for Idealism is a work of traditional metaphysics. It belongs to what the American philosopher D.C. Williams called "speculative cosmology", as opposed to those more abstract and fundamental inquiries which he called "analytic ontology". John Foster argues for an unfashionable conclusion. He attempts to establish a phenomenalistic idealism, very similar to that put forward by Berkeley.

He starts by trying to turn the tables on contemporary materialists about the mind. It is almost an orthodoxy at present among philosophers that the mental is definable in a purely causal or functional way. The concept of the mental does not extend beyond what which stands in various complex relations of cause, and of effect, to bodily behaviour and body stimulation. The mental is only given to us as that which affects, or is affected by, the body. This entails what J.J.C. Smart called the "topic-neutrality" of mental language. Topic-neutrality allows the logical possibility that what the mental is in physical processes etc. in the brain. (The topic-neutral proposition that somebody called leaves it open that it was the doer who called.) The materialist then appeals to considerations of general scientific plausibility to support the view that the mental is in fact brain-physical.

Mr Foster argues, on the contrary, that it is our concept of the physical which is topic-neutral, thus leaving open the possibility that the true nature of the physical is mental. This is a variation on an old line of thought. Descartes had opposed a non-physical spiritual mind to a purely physical body. But his epistemological demand for an indubitable starting-point for philosophical enquiry led him to assert that the mind was more directly known than the body. We can be assured of the existence of the latter only because we can move from the existence of our mind to the existence of a God who is not a deceiver and so to the truth of our belief in the existence of a physical world. Many idealists since have sought to use Descartes's epistemology against his ontology, and deny, or mentalistically modify, his realist-physicalist doctrine of the material world.

For the details of his argument, however, Foster is more beholden to Berkeley. Our conceptual fix upon the physical is gained purely through the sensible qualities: seen colours, smelled smells, seen and felt spatial relations, and so on. The sensible qualities, however, are mind dependent: they are qualities of our sensations. If the physical lies beyond the sensible qualities, then we have no concrete knowledge of the nature of the physical. The physical might be mental. Indeed, it is not mental, then it is no more than "something we know not what", which plays a certain causal role.

This is not the end of Foster's argument. Indeed it is only its first step. But it is a crucial step. I am inclined to think that it is taken too easily. Chapter Six, "The Confinement of Qualia", is the critical point. Here, it seems to me, Foster fails to take seriously enough the position of the Direct Realist about perception. A Direct Realist holds that the sensible qualities and relations are objective qualities and relations of physical existents. These qualities and relations may, and presumably do, exist in complete independence of the minds which perceive them.

Foster takes the view that when somebody has a sensation of red, be it veridical, illusory or hallucinatory, then the sensible quality of redness actually exists. The sensation, however, we do not sense a red sensation: he rejects an act/object analysis. Rather, the sensation is an instance of (sensible) redness, and because sensations are mental, sensible redness is a mental quality.

A Direct Realist, however, will maintain that a sensation of red is a perception, which may or may not be veridical, of a physically red surface, for instance the surface of a ripe tomato. The perception itself, whether veridical or illusory, need not be red, any more than the belief that the moon is made of green cheese is a little sphere of green cheese. If the Direct Realist is also a materialist then he will think of the sensation of red as a firing of neurons in the brain.

Foster does bring various arguments against Direct Realism. One, perhaps the strongest, is that in the case of the so-called secondary qualities—colour, sound, smell and so on—there is no scientific reason to think that these sensible qualities really qualify external objects. All we have in the object are the scientifically respectable primary qualities. The Direct Realist should meet this, I believe, by identifying the secondary qualities with certain complexes, perhaps idiosyncratic complexes, of primary qualities. To take the simplest case as illustration, sounds are nothing but certain sorts of air-wave.

This identification should not be made in the causal-functional form which Descartes from John Locke: that public sounds are just those physical happenings (viz. air-waves) which produce suitable sorts of sensation in suitable persons. To say this is to give back the pass to Foster. What is better, I think, is what may be called a gestalt model. We pick out sounds as a whole, in much the same way that we often pick out faces, complex shapes, etc. as a whole. Unlike faces and shapes, however, we are unable, even when we give the task our closest attention, to pick out the constituents of sounds. In fact, we have scientific reason to believe, sounds are patterns of air-waves. This view is very unappealing phenomenologically, but it seems to have much else in its favour. It has not lacked upholders besides the present reviewer. Foster does not discuss it.

Foster's best case is perhaps that provided by bodily sensations such as itches. There is a special sensible

quality connected with itches, yet, Foster argues, we can hardly conceive of this quality existing independently of sensations of itch. It is merely made similar use of pain.) But even in this, which is the best case for Foster, there exists a Direct Realist account of the situation. To have an itch is to have a perception (a bodily perception or proprioception), a perception which may or may not be veridical, that a disturbance of a highly specific sort is going on in a certain portion of the body. This disturbance, the Direct Realist will say, could exist unperceived. Those moved by the scientific considerations about the secondary qualities canvassed above will then identify the quality with, say, stimulation of certain peripheral receptors. However, one American philosopher, the late James Corman, thought of the quality as additional to, or emergent upon, such stimulation of receptors. An odd view, in my opinion. But in many ways less odd than some which Foster espouses.

Foster does say that if we think of sensations in terms of a traditional act/object distinction—sensations as acts of awareness with the sensible qualities qualifying whatever the acts are aware of—then the sensations can only be understood as especially vivid ways of conceiving. But what Foster here regards as a *reductio ad absurdum*, I would regard as good sense. He thinks that, by contrast with direct and vivid ways of conceiving qualities, that is, he denies that a red image actually has the sensory quality of redness which he thinks that a sensation of redness does have. I believe that he should push his scepticism a little further and make sensations conceptual also.

Foster's argument up to this point is not an easy one. But now it becomes even harder to follow. He has claimed to establish that we have no better than a topic-neutral conception of the physical. He wants to advance to the conclusion that the physical world cannot be an ultimate reality. Ultimate reality, he argues, is wholly non-physical.

He tries to establish two principles.

The first is principle of variability: the physical geometry of a world is logically determined by the natural laws governing the underlying reality which constitutes that world. It is a principle of variability because the laws obeyed by reality are "different in different possible worlds". The second principle is a principle of constancy: the physical geometry of a space is essential to its nature and never "differs in different possible worlds". The conclusion from these two premises is that a spatial world (and so a material world) cannot be the underlying reality.

Concerning the first principle, it is an interesting idea that the spatial order is fundamentally a causal or lawlike order. Foster tries to prove it rigorously by an ingenious and complex argument. He requires as one premise his previous conclusion that our concept of the physical is topic-neutral. To get a principle of variability he requires the assumption that the laws of reality are contingent, that they differ from possible world to world. This assumption is not universally accepted by philosophers.

To support the principle of constancy, however, Foster argues for a necessity. It is used to be thought that it could be perceived a priori that space is necessarily, or essentially, Euclidean in nature. The discovery of the possibility of non-Euclidean geometries changed that. It is now recognized that the nature of space has to be discovered a posteriori, by experience. Recently, however, Saul Kripke has argued that some truths, although discoverable only a posteriori, must nevertheless be accounted necessary, not contingent. It is this (rather controversial) doctrine that Foster relies upon to support his contention that whatever geometry a space has is essentially.

Foster now has his conclusion that the physical world cannot be ultimately real. One might still think that there is an "external" reality which causes our sense-experience, an external reality of which the physical world is some sort of representation or encoding. Given Foster's earlier arguments, this reality is likely to be mental.

Foster has no quarrel with the idea that there is an external reality, probably mental, which causes our experience. But he does deny that it is at all likely that the physical world systematically represents that reality. Physical world, he argues, is nothing but the logical product of facts about human experience.

It was at this point that I finally failed to grasp his argument. It has something to do with the alleged fact that, given his previous argument, we must assume that the laws of the physical world are in a certain specific sense uniform, while lacking any sense that anything external to our experience obeys such laws. But the details escaped me. At any rate, Foster has reached his idealist conclusion.

In a final part, Foster engages to construct a time-order for the future, experiencing, selves who are the only thing that we know to be part of ultimate contingent reality. He begins with phenomenal time, the time-order in our sensations. From this he constructs something called stream time, and from this subjective time-order the time-order of experience and other mental events in the life of a single subject. From subjective time he goes to intersubjective time, the time-order of everybody's experience. This is not physical time, but he constructs that too. The main cement used to create these successively more sophisticated orderings is causal relation.

Foster is a philosopher who thinks for himself and that is certainly admirable. When I started the book I thought that it was clear, although difficult, and excessively technical. I cannot believe that the technicalities are really necessary. At least they should be in notes and appendices. As for the difficulty, I thought that Foster might plead not too implausibly that this is forced upon him by the difficulty of the issues which he is considering. But as the argument went on, a structure ever lengthening, he difficulty became less supportable. It disappears so far into his own argument that he cannot be followed.

## MEDIEVAL HISTORY

# Prosperous and brisk

R. B. Dobson

ROBERT S. GOTTFRIED

Bury St Edmunds and the Urban  
Ordnance 1290-1539  
313pp. Guildford: Princeton  
University Press. £19.40.  
0 691 05340 5

As Thomas Carlyle pointed out as long ago as 1843 there are few places in England more capable of provoking illuminating reflections about the differences between medieval past and modern present than Bury St Edmunds, that "prosperous brisk town" beautifully diversifying the general grassy face of Suffolk. Thanks to the incomparably vivid chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond, the abbey and town of Bury St Edmunds in the time of Abbot Samson (1182-1211) will always be the single most important place of secondary pilgrimage for those who wish to remember that medieval English communities "were not peopled with phantoms but with men of flesh and blood, made altogether as we are".

The Bury St Edmunds of the later Middle Ages, despite the scholarly attention it has long received at the hands of Mary Lobel and many local antiquaries, is a good deal more difficult to rescue from oblivion. All the more welcome therefore is Robert Gottfried's energetic and enterprising attempt to reconstruct the social and economic life of this important East Anglian town from the late thirteenth century to the Dissolution in 1539 of the great Benedictine monastery which first made it famous. Comparatively fresh from his recent foray into the contentious battleground of fifteenth-century English plague and population problems, Professor Gottfried is equally free from inhibitions in dealing the currently no less hotly disputed world of the late medieval town. The result is a vigorous and wide-ranging exposition of the view that in the later Middle Ages the town of Bury St Edmunds enjoyed a remarkable "economic boom", a boom whose most distinctive characteristics were its prominence as the most important textile marketing centre in west Suffolk, the increased wealth and political power of its borough elite and the reduction of the abbey of St Edmundsbury itself to the status of a "jaded doyen" long before its final suppression.

As detailed modern studies of individual English towns are still so comparatively few in number, no book with such a message can afford to be ignored by urban historians, even if they agree with Gottfried himself that the buoyant fortunes of late medieval Bury St Edmunds were untypical of those usually experienced elsewhere. Certainly there could be no more pictorial contrast, as the author shows himself well aware, between this optimistic account of urban efflorescence and the infinitely more melancholy account of late medieval Coventry, provided by Charles Poynter-Adams in the last substantial contribution to the present debate on the so-called late medieval urban crisis. All allowances having been made for the vast dissimilarities between these two boroughs, and their surviving documentation, the precise degree of urban prosperity or decay in most late medieval English towns still lies, to a not altogether comfortable degree, in the eye of the beholder. It accordingly seems to me that the more courageous of Gottfried to present his own study as the product of history, the result of the perfection of new tools and techniques of analysis and catalogue. Readers of this challenging statement will be all the more surprised to encounter the central paradox of this study: despite many statistical tables and lists many of them are in some ways one of the most impressionistic and subjective accounts of a late medieval English town to have been written.

Such criticism does not of course undermine the general plausibility of Gottfried's conclusions advanced by him in the course of his strenuous and, to be sure, long-term research. Out of often intractable sources he has pieced together a

must clearly be read by the scores of English historians at present confronting similar problems of deciding how far one can safely apply modern statistical techniques to urban archives. Particularly instructive in this respect, as it is central to his interpretation of the economic development of the town, is "The Demographic Basis for Change". Whatever one may think of the remarkable aplomb with which the author constructs tables of male and female replacement ratios on the basis of testamentary evidence, he certainly convinces us that Bury St Edmunds conforms to the typical pre-industrial urban syndrome of being incapable of natural self-regeneration and accordingly heavily dependent upon immigration from its surrounding hinterland.

Much less happy is the guess (in effect little more) that on the evidence of the West Suffolk muster returns the gross population of Bury St Edmunds can be estimated at 5,438 in 1522 as compared with 4,200 at the time of the first poll-tax in 1377. On this occasion, Gottfried commendably concedes that "my system is rather haphazard", an admission which makes it all the more worth noting that by the closing pages of his book he has convinced himself that "Bury's population continued to rise as a phenomenon for which there seems to be clear evidence whatsoever. Not for the first time, advocates of late medieval urban prosperity might find it easier to argue their case if they emancipated themselves from the view that a wealthy town necessarily had to be a populous town."

Much more compelling, and certainly one of the most thought-provoking sections of this monograph, is the use of sacrist's rentals and other sources to show that late medieval Bury seems to have undergone a topographical revolution whereby the older and more central parts of the town increasingly suffered from "urban blight" at exactly the time when the most flourishing areas of settlement moved to the "corners" and the "periphery". Even more informative is Gottfried's biographical investigation of the small group of wealthy men who dominated social and economic life in late medieval Bury, an investigation which cannot however be said to lead to altogether unambiguous support for the general thesis of his book. The fact that "the single largest personal fortune in the history of the late medieval town" should belong to Sir Robert Drury, Speaker of the Commons and Privy Counsellor to Henry VIII, is self-evidently a testimony to the wealth attainable by the Suffolk gentry rather than by the burghers of Bury itself.

Indeed the prevailing impression left by this study is that the prosperity of Bury St Edmunds was the result less of notable initiatives on the part of its inhabitants than of its good fortune in being located in the centre of a particularly active cloth-producing area. In its important discussion of how Bury prospered as the principal regional market for the textile villages along the Stour, and how its merchants withstood competition from those of Ipswich and King's Lynn, this is a work which in the last resort does more to support than to deny Phythian-Adams's hypothesis that by the end of the Middle Ages the only successful English towns were those which "looked outwards". Nor is it by any means as certain as Gottfried would have us believe that the monks of St Edmund had cause for serious alarm at these developments: it seems extremely unlikely that the future historians of the late medieval obbey will be content with the somewhat over-simplified contrast between a flourishing town and an allegedly chronically insolvent abbey continuously presented throughout this book.

More likely to stand the test of time is Gottfried's lively account of social and religious activity within a chapter somewhat misleadingly entitled "The Extent and Division of Burghal Corporate Power". Even here, however, the reader's confidence can sometimes be shaken. A lengthy discussion of the so-called "medical community" in Bury certainly lends support to those who believe that it was in the provincial towns of late medieval England that the foundations of modern general medical practice were originally laid; but it can certainly do no service to that argument to identify as an "East Anglian physician" the comparatively well-known Henry Rudde, Doctor of Canon Law and ecclesiastical administrator, on the grounds that he appears in the records as "master doctor". Here and elsewhere one suspects that a somewhat less hasty approach to the evidential problems, and to the writing of this study might have made it more impressive than it already is. Would the inhabitants of late medieval Bury have altogether recognized themselves amidst this enthusiastic portrayal of "quite well heeled merchants", of Benedictine monks "ever strapped for cash" and of craftsmen "waving a bit on the side"?

"Truly it is no easy matter", to quote Carlyle for the last time, "to get across the chasm of Seven Centuries filled with such material." Professor Gottfried's stimulating study is a salutary reminder that (dare one say?) the use of the computer makes bridging that chasm a more, rather than less, hazardous venture than it ever was.

## Holy Saturday

to platinosung, mode III

Walking through St Mary's churchyard with the washing I can hear from the windows *Pange lingua* gurgling down the twilight air as the organist rehearses for the high day of the year.

I have seen the sullen faces to the all-night laudarette dark eyes fixed upon the windows where the sun will never set though the world is turning, turning it will not be whiter yet.

He will ransom us tomorrow he whom yesterday we sold for the children of the promise silver shall he turned to gold but today we work in darkness smoothing linen fold by fold.

Keith Bosley

# Predominantly foreign

Edward Miller

T. H. LLOYD

Allen Merchants in England in the  
High Middle Ages  
253pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95.  
0 312 01856 8

Historians of English commerce enjoy an advantage shared by few other students of the medieval economy: consistently, from 1275 onwards, at least some branches of overseas trade were subjected to customs duties, the collection of which left behind records which have been preserved in the archives of the exchequer. Those records can be manipulated in order to provide quantitative assessments of complete branches of trade on a national scale, something that is not possible in other areas of economic activity at that time. The customs accounts, therefore, have been much exploited by historians. Half a century ago a small band of scholars assembled by Eileen Power and M. M. Postan relied mainly upon them for their studies of English trade in the fifteenth century, and more recently E. M. Carrus-Wilson and M. K. James have used them to establish definitively the dimensions of the English wool, cloth and wine trades during the late Middle Ages. Now they have also provided the principal body of evidence upon which T. H. Lloyd's *Allen Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages* is based.

Lloyd's title calls for a word of explanation. His "High Middle Ages" are not the early centuries which the French call *le haut moyen âge* and they are rather more restricted than the German *Hochmittelalter*. His main emphasis falls upon the period 1303-36, which opened with Edward I's success in securing differential import and export duties from the foreign empires, and closing with the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War which, in a variety of ways, altered the context in which all merchants operated. The new alien duties, although they were discontinued during the middle years of Edward II's reign, generated for the years 1303-11 and 1322-36 two sets of records that are invaluable to historians of commerce. First, there is a more or less continuous series of summary accounts, part by port, which enables figures to be put upon the number of standard cloths and the value of general merchandise imported and exported by foreign merchants; the hundredweights of wax they imported and how many sacks of wool and lasts of hides they exported. Lloyd summarizes these data in an appendix of tables which only exclude, for reasons which he justifies, one principal branch of the often trade: the substantial imports of wine they brought in, mainly from Gascony. Second, for most ports "particular accounts" have survived, although much more sporadically, listing imports and exports in somewhat varying detail, ship by ship and according to the merchant consigning them. They afford a picture of the structure as well as of the dimensions of the trade by foreigners in the English ports.

The customs accounts, of course, have defects from the point of view of the historian. They may understate the volume of commerce since these duties, like any other taxes, were evaded or avoided if that was possible. Their purpose, too, was to make clear the liabilities of the collectors rather than the details of trading, so that the information they afford is not always respectably comparable. After the latter fallow, however, English merchants stepped into the place, so long occupied by Italians as bankers to the Crown; and possibly at an earlier period would they have disposed of the resources to undertake that responsibility. *Allen Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages* also furnishes the background of the developing capacity of denizens which became evident in the mid-fourteenth century.

The value of this study does not depend solely upon the fact that Lloyd, for the first time, has used the whole range of evidence provided by the customs (and of course much more) for every branch of the alien trade. In many respects his point of departure is in the reign of Edward I, when foreign merchants dominated English trade, including the export of English wool across the North Sea and the return traffic in cloth from Flemish looms and luxury goods from the entrepôts of the Low Countries and Champagne. It all the indications point to a notable expansion of English trade in the last twelfth and thirteenth centuries, most of them suggest that foreigners played a principal part in that expansion, with Flemings and, later, Italians in the leading roles, but with a diverse supporting cast of Colongers, Norwegians, Brabantians, Normans, Cahorsins, Gascons and Spaniards, and with Baltic Germans becoming increasingly prominent as the thirteenth century progressed. Foreign merchants, moreover, were not only to be found on the business of a local wool and wine trade, but also in the export of English wool from a London tallage roll of 1304 which shows Vintry ward to be full of Gascons and Dowgate ward populated by Germans, while resident representatives of the Italian merchant companies were scattered through the heart of the city. In these respects London was not totally exceptional. Germans had establishments at Boston and King's Lynn as well as in the London Steelyard; at Newcastle there were resident Flemings and an Italian tower over the business of a local wool whom he married, and a famous Cahorsin, William Servat, who settled in London, sold wine as far away as Durham. This was a time when the history of alien merchants was central to the economic history of England.

At the same time the records of the "new custom" paid by aliens begin at a time when, in some sectors of trade, their predominance was being undermined. The boom in wool exports in the first decade of the fourteenth century seems to have been English-led; the English share in the wool trade, the new maritime trade to Italy excepted, continued to grow before the 1336 Englishmen dominated the Gascon wine trade; and they may also have been mainly responsible for slow revival of textile exports. This relative growth of native trade was still on a very narrow front, for English merchants probably played a modest role in the Baltic, took little part in the Iberian trade and ventured not at all to the Mediterranean. Indeed, the English break-out from a trade basically focused on the nearer Continental lands had to await the age of the Renaissance. On the other hand, the significance of the relative gains of denizens, conspicuous in the period should not be belittled. Lloyd's explanation of this trend is brief but convincing: the fact that the foreigner paid heavier duties played its part, but probably more important was a whole diversity of political circumstances and government policies which were turned against (or to the exploitation of) the alien merchant. The sorry tale of the bankruptcy of Italian companies, from the Riccardi in the 1290s to the Baroli and Peruzzi in the 1340s, was in no small measure a result of this process. After the latter fallow, however, English merchants stepped into the place, so long occupied by Italians as bankers to the Crown; and possibly at an earlier period would they have disposed of the resources to undertake that responsibility. *Allen Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages* also furnishes the background of the developing capacity of denizens which became evident in the mid-fourteenth century.

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# Schools for young Republicans

Tony Judt

KATHERINE AUSPITZ

The Radical Bourgeoisie: The Ligue de l'Enseignement and the origins of the Third Republic 1866-1895  
237pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£22.50.  
0 521 23861 7

There was a time when history was a respected branch of moral philosophy. Then, for an important moment in the European experience, it became pedagogy. More recently, in headlong retreat from such demanding identities, it has taken refuge in the social sciences. We are all social historians now, or, more precisely, we are all French social historians now, even those who have no professional interest whatsoever in things French.

Unsurprisingly, the sharpest impact of the generation-long hegemony of French social history (an overlong *durée* in its own right) has been on writing about France; no less predictably, the by now traditional French unconcern with narrative and chronology has been most enthusiastically emulated by English-language historians of France. It is thus genuinely refreshing to read on unfashionably conceived study of an unfashionable subject from one of the latter, and this would be the case even if Katherine Auspitz's book on the origins of the French Third Republic were not as good as it is.

Professor Auspitz has a misleadingly simple theme: the educational societies of the last years of the Second Empire, their organization and aims and the role played by their members in the establishment of the political system of Republican France after 1877. Her point, simply put, is that these societies and the social thinking they embodied and promoted came to form the skeleton of the political class which dominated French public life into the 1930s. Without the broad and respectable network provided by the movement for free, compulsory and late primary education, members of which provided fully one-third of the parliamentary *députés* in 1895, 1870 would have gone the way of 1848.

This doesn't sound very startling. If it comes as news that the education issue truly mattered to early Third Republic politicians and their supporters, this can only be because it got forgotten in the rush to find something altogether different to say about the emergence of modern France. Auspitz has some withering asides on historians who have found it

convenient, or merely witty, to reduce the anti-clerical Radicals to instruments of an emergent capitalism (Sanford Eliott) or to sneer at the intellectual inadequacy and political irrelevance of their beliefs (Theodore Zeldin). She charges them at the very least with an unsympathetic anachronism (which is a pretty devastating accusation if you happen to take history seriously), and she makes the charge stick.

What this book makes especially clear, through its concentration on the formation of a Republican opposition under Louis Napoléon, is just how important is the development during the Second Empire of a new political outlook and an altered conception of political conflict. The advantage of readjusting our sights to take in the 1860s is not simply that this offers a better explanation of later matters such as the Commune or political Radicalism; it also provides a handle for grasping the oddly disembodied, floating political culture of Republican France. It becomes clear that the Third Republic was not born by accident, and did not acquire its constitutional structure by misadventure, but that it was, in context, a very rational and successful solution to a peculiarly French circumstance — a political circumstance, identified as such by the worried Republican opponents of Bonapartism.

The solution to the political problem was seen as simultaneously social and intellectual (political solutions as such were precluded by the very nature of the Imperial régime — an important circumstantial consideration), hence the emphasis on nationwide secular education and hence, too, Auspitz's intelligent concern with Durkheim, rather than the colorated Alain, as the Radical theorist. The dustiest provincial Radical, provided only that he came to maturity during the later years of Louis Napoléon (as most of them did), could work out for himself the political cost of the anomic society.

Necessarily, then, Auspitz is concerned with a particular generation of radical Republicans. Her protagonists are the assorted Jules (Ferry, Grévy, etc), Félix Faure, Sadi Carnot, Léon Say and Léon Bourgeois and their contemporaries. Over time, and by 1900 at the latest, these men were anything but "radicals" — most of them went on to become presidents or prime ministers of France. There is perhaps something of a trifle counter-intuitive about all this. The high years of political radicalism in France, dating from the formation of a Radical Party in 1901 and lasting through the 1930s, offer better material to more

conventional accounts, of interminable parliamentary *attentisme*, of ministerial reshuffles and Edouard Herriot ("le discrédit lyonnais"). Perhaps the book manages to say something refreshing about French Radicalism by avoiding any engagement with the subject as conventionally conceived (by 1885 most of Auspitz's radical bourgeois were Opportunists or Moderates, in the political vocabulary of the period). It is also true that the very Radical successes of 1902-06, in completing the separation of Church from State and establishing final and complete control over the education of children, rather undermined political Radicalism by depriving it of a programme.

Nevertheless, it remains inconceivable the case that the régime of Vichy focused obsessively and at considerable expense upon the effort to reverse the legislation on schools and religion. Unless we choose to dismiss much of contemporary French history as a series of illusory, quixotic conflicts over irrationally held myths (and in the name of what metahistorical rationality are we to undertake such a dismissal?), it must be conceded to Professor Auspitz that hers is the wiser intuition.

This said, transgressing fashion is not a risk-free business. Auspitz's sources for the character of the 1851

uprising are a century out of date (this is carrying academic unconventionality to unnecessary extremes). To evince apparent ignorance of the relevant work of Agulhon, Vigier, Margadant and many others, is to weaken the case that the author builds for the centrality of the Imperial decades in modern French history. Since Auspitz, December 1851 saw a widespread provincial uprising in defence of variously understood Republican beliefs — without which background it is difficult to see how the Ligue de l'Enseignement could ever have established such deep roots, and apparently in just those areas which saw most activity in the dying Second Republic. The author would have been further sustained in her opinions (not that these ever really go understated) by a reading of the characteristically expansive thesis of Raymond Huard, who comes to very similar conclusions from quite different premises and a regional perspective.

Lastly, Auspitz is altogether too old-fashioned in her occasional comments upon women in her period. I pass over the reference on page 3 to "all citizens — peasants, workers and women, as well as bourgeois men", although its taxonomic function escapes me. More immediately pertinent to her argument, however, is her rejection of Zeldin's contention that the Church in France helped to liberate women from

male domination. Stated thus it is course nonsense — as Auspitz points out and as Zeldin anyway considers the Church had no such claim, at least in its social capacity, to provide a "space" that was increasingly open as the Republic progressed. This development was not unrelated to an exclusively male character of the bar, the *cabaret*, the political society, the trade union, the political party (left no less than right). As to argue that given the congruence of organized religion and political conservatism in France, its enfranchised women might prove a serious threat to the political status at least in the short term. As Professor Auspitz would be the first to acknowledge, the fact that this opinion was to prove almost wholly ungrounded did not prevent it from being deeply held at the time and as to merit our attention. It is not the fact of the paradoxes surrounding the emergence of Republican politics in France, and more attention to it would not only have added to the account offered; it would also have furthered the view that the analytical study of traditional historical topics need only at the price of the neglect of the concerns and insights of a generation

## From frustration to fantasy

Eugen Weber

STEPHEN WILSON

Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair  
\$12pp. Associated University Presses.  
£25.  
0 8386 3037 5

A specially trained torturer should first of all cut off their eyelids with a pair of scissors... poisonous spiders will be put in the half-shells of walnuts, placed on their eyes, and securely fixed by strings tied round their heads. The hungry spiders will then gnaw slowly through the cornea and into the eye, until nothing is left in the blind sockets.

This is what *l'antisémitisme* of October 18, 1898, suggested under the pen of Henri Rochefort, for the magistrates of the Criminal Chamber of the Cour de Cassation, supposedly favourable to a revision of the Dreyfus Case. If this was the way to treat alleged Christian supporters of a "Jewish" cause, what could be left for the Jews? Stephen Wilson addresses that and other questions in 578 pages of dense text, 164 pages of notes, and a further seventy pages of assorted aids, including an excellent index: a *thèse* on the grand scale, worthy of the French tradition. Appropriately enough, when his treatment leaves little doubt that anti-semitism is as traditionally French as a *bûche* of faggots.

He does not, thank goodness, give us another recounting of the Dreyfus Affair, but uses its turmoil to illuminate the anti-semitic paroxysms of the 1890s, in the more general context of the anti-semitic movement in France and to Algeria, which he examines under a number of headings: economic, social, (and socialist), nationalistic, racial, religious, and sexual. In which the anti-semitic "movement" is projected his own analytical characteristics on the mythical Jew. The quotation from Rochefort comes from the "sexual" chapter. With this is a very intelligent book, judicious, thoughtful, and comprehensive to the point of overabundance.

As an active member of the ill-but-the-kitchen-sink school, I hesitate to say that Wilson gives us a bit much; but quotations used to drive each point irresistibly across the mind, and his irresistible desire to skip. Those who read such worthy thoughts will find both text and notes full of information.

Particularly rewarding are the chapters that provide detailed studies of French opinion of the anti-semitic

riots of 1898 which others had ignored; of the nationalist contributions honouring the memory of the forger, Henry, and their complot of practical suggestions about what might be done to Jews: vivisection, dissect, drown, castrate, put out eyes, crush to a pulp with bluegum, nail to wall or cross, boil in acid bath, burn at stake or in glass funnels (to local touch from Baccarat), skin and then bind brooks with, or turn into bedside rugs to tread on (from a priest). A dismal litany of wishes to be fulfilled half a century later, of repressed violence and aggression temporarily condemned to verbal expression only.

What really interests Wilson, however, is the social function of anti-semitism, what makes anti-semites in a particular time and place. His careful treatment confirms the many possible elements of an over-determined phenomenon, but his argument concentrates on the *fin-de-siècle* reaction to "modernization" and to rapid social change which many perceived as decadence. He also emphasizes the rise of the popular press serving newly — and barely literate masses receptive to simplistic explanations of complex problems. Talented publicists like Drumont, and a host of less talented ones, articulated relatively unstructured bigotries into a coherent ideology appropriate to emergent democracy and political organizations. They were able to draw on traditional prejudices and stereotypes of a diffuse kind, easily taken for granted and seldom if ever examined, to recruit an audience for more specific and virulent doctrines.

Finally, the author seems to believe, like Sartre, that anti-semitism is first oriented towards political action then towards discharging accumulated frustrations, its tenants apparently seized by their apocalyptic fantasies of redemptive punishment. Yet, far from reflect less irresolution, the impotence, and there are many people in the world today who would beg to disagree, of the PLO, or Israel, in more or less painful circumstances. Who is to say that, given the opportunity, some of these people would not act on their wishes? In any case, if everything that was alleged against the Jews were true — and many took it to be true — repression, punishment, extermination, seemed the only conclusions. As we have seen.

Wilson's work fits particularly well with Michael Marcus's *Politics of Assimilation*, whose study of the Jewish community is now complemented by an investigation of their anti-semitic foes, and with the more recent publications of Sternhell and Marcus-Pakton, for which the present book provides both an introduction and a crucial confirmation. It can be recommended to all serious scholars as required reading in fields crowded with more dispensable works.

This being said, let me take mild issue on a few questions of detail. Anti-semitic theories may well have been more than a small minority in their profession, as Wilson suggests; and his impression could reflect a version of history written by the victors, which neither party had an interest to deny. I incline rather to the contrary view, of the experience of Genet and de Bévotia and the University faculties of Dijon to be anti-Dreyfusards almost to a man, and only three professors in all the

lycée of Versailles who believed Dreyfus innocent.

The relationship established between hard times and anti-semitic manifestations is convincing. It makes one wish for local identification on a scale which even the author's heroic research cannot supply. In instance: the agricultural crisis of the nineteenth century's last quarter, a time of falling prices, it thus seems peasant farming for the most part was precarious in the North, West, and south-eastern regions, where Wilson identifies a fairly high degree of anti-semitism, but much less in the wine country folk who bought their wine and wine (journeymen, rural artisans, etc). In the same way, in small and larger towns, the economic depression affected *rentiers*, who drew their income from obligations with their neighbours engaged in industry or trade. Were *rentiers*, rural artisans, and such, less prominent in the anti-semitic ranks than those whose last times affected more directly?

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## Wee chaps without chins

Judie Newman

RICHARD JOHNSTONE

The Will to Believe: Novelists of the Nineteen-Thirties  
144pp. Oxford University Press.  
£15.00.  
0 19 211779 3

On the jacket the late Philip Toynbee describes Richard Johnstone's book as the best summing up of these particular writers that I have read. The writers in question (Upward, Warner, Greene, Waugh, Isherwood, Orwell) are considered as publishing in a time of crisis and chaos, and thus seeking in commitment to a "faith" (communism or Catholicism) the lost order and stability of childhood. Summary, however, betrays the book. Only the works of the 1930s are discussed, giving a curiously truncated impression of the commitment of Waugh and Greene. The volume devotes only nineteen pages to Waugh and seventeen to Greene; the space devoted to Orwell is even less. Inevitably no extensive treatment can be given to the novels, their context or the concepts involved. There is now no dearth of writing about the 1930s; indeed the mythologizing impulse took wing even before the decade was out. There is therefore little need for an expensive summary. In addition, as a literary critic, Richard Johnstone tends to write as Adam in the Garden. The notes are inadequate, there is no bibliography, and almost no reference to the immense body of secondary criticism of Waugh, Orwell and Greene, though Johnstone is clearly familiar with it.

None of this would matter if the book had the virtues of an elegant thesis, polemical thrust or even idiosyncratic enthusiasm. There is, however, an imbalance in Johnstone's selection. Communism gripped the literary imagination in the 1930s, while Catholicism was the less popular alternative. Only one chapter, however, really considers socialist grounds. Johnstone divides the socialist novels into three groups: the proletarian novel, the socialist novel, and the novel of specific socialist commitment. The proletarian novel is given an example, the socialist novel is also briefly sketched, on the grounds that the committed writer was drawn to his faith as a form of individual self-validation. Thus both Walter Green-

wond and Lewis Grassie Gibbon are written off as failing to point to the need for political action, for containing the seeds of conservatism and for creating characters whose primary aim is to achieve a more favourable relation to the status quo. Johnstone rightly underlines the difference between the proletarian and the committed novel. The former recognizes a gap between social action and personal gratification, whereas the latter sees revolutionary commitment and the desire for personal fulfillment as interdependent. But for some readers this is precisely where the proletarian novel scores. The vast panorama of Gibbon's *A Scots Quair* excels in the sense conveyed of the entropic force of change, of the waste and sacrifice involved in political action. Johnstone's belief that his chosen writers sought to reassert the strength of the individual through the medium of belief, rather than subsuming their personalities and art to a cause, comes dangerously close to radical chic. It may well be arguable that Auden's sophisticated individuality distinguishes him from "the dull mass of Communists" but some of that dull mass died in Spain for their unsophisticated, non-individualistic beliefs.

Essentially Johnstone's selection concentrates on the men Gibbon described as "wee chaps without chins", a group cohering in terms of class (upper middle), period of birth (the first decade of the century) and type of education (public school). Unfortunately this selection is justified on neither polemical nor enthusiastic grounds. There is a great deal of hedging and ditching in the argument. Cases are constructed and thrown over, reservations made, generalizations re-introduced, and any clear position lost in a welter of counter-assertions. Contradictions and paradoxes are discerned in each writer, but also abound in the discussion itself. Johnstone attacks Orwell for condemning conversion as the act of a child unable to face an adult world, yet his own account of Greene's conversion is couched in the same terms. Orwell is also criticized for accepting the definition of religion as "conversion" or "not-quite-conversion". But the idea that only an alienated or sick self could take to religion, and that ideology is only a psychological support, is a very English view which underlies the whole book. (Green and Waugh, for example, are described as using religion as a safety-net against despair.) Johnstone writes interestingly about the anti-intellectual bias of the Auden generation, but is guilty of the same bias himself. Much

effort is expended to prove that conversions were emotional rather than intellectual. Upward's real interest in the details of Marxism is discounted as merely a function of a deeper emotional commitment. Greene and Waugh made similar claims to intellectual conversion, but Johnstone simply sees them as using rationality to take out insurance on their faith. (An intellectual belief is supposedly not as subject to later to the need to trust the tale rather than the teller, Johnstone's approach to his writers' own statements seems to impugn pathological dishonesty to their motives. He describes Waugh's claims as disingenuous, and Greene's childhood memories as contrived. There is a tide of creeping psychologism here which is not sufficiently held in check. Orwell, of course, did not convert at all, and is therefore rather out of place in this

context. Johnstone solves this problem by the old dodge of arguing that whenever dislike of anything is evidenced by covert attraction. Excluded as a boy from a superior group, Orwell's distaste for later groupings is therefore related to the politics of envy, and an emotional reaction. Except in the case of Isherwood, however, Johnstone is distinctly coy about other emotional commitments of the 1930s, a period Julian Symonds described as the "homosexual decade".

The chapters on Isherwood, Upward and Warner are nevertheless the best in the book. Johnstone's desire to highlight contradictions makes for a balanced and informative reading, with an attractive emphasis on the exploratory rather than the dogmatic qualities of their prose. The more

stylized writers fare less well. Cmedy and commitment are unhappy bedfellows, and the readings of Waugh and Orwell suffer as a result. The idea that Waugh in *Decline and Fall* concentrates his values in a vitalistic elite speedily elides with the notion of a spiritual elite. Margot Beste-Cherwynde fits this mould most uncomfortably, and Captain Grimes not at all. (Nothing is made of Grimes's undoubted vitalism which spends itself on the youthful Clutterbuck in a decidedly non-spiritual fashion.) Subtleties of tone are also neglected in the discussion of *Brighton Rock*, which is dismissed along with *Brideshead Revisited* as sentimental. While the reader may not want the assertions of priest or commissar to go unchallenged, he is likely to finish this book with the sensation that nothing of much value came out of the 1930s.

## More than just sad

Rupert Christiansen

WIRT WILLIAMS

The Tragic Art of Ernest Hemingway  
240pp. Louisiana State University Press.  
£10.80.  
0 8071 0884 7

The Tragic Art of Ernest Hemingway is a classic example of American criticism at its most exhaustive and literal. Based on the already thorough work of Carlos Baker, it aims to establish Hemingway as "one of the century's greatest makers of tragedy" and marshals models from Aristotle, Hegel and Sartre to prove its case (*Oedipus Rex* is engagingly referred to as *Res*). "Protagonists in confrontation with an overwhelming universe... irreversible catastrophe... spiritual transcendence" — no implication of the claim is avoided. Wirt Williams admits that some of the short stories are "subtragic" or "not-quite-tragic", but the major works are carefully classified within a rigorous definition of the genre. The *Sun Also Rises* is a tragedy of passive acceptance. *A Farewell to Arms* of catastrophe of fate. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* of willful choice, while *The Old Man and the Sea* moves towards a Christian ethos.

The basic problem is that this removes Hemingway to a level of pussy-footing literary discourse and

consciousness that he avoided and deplored. Hemingway's perception of tragedy was ordinary, rooted in the cussed ironies of life and the virtue of stoicism in face of it. *To Have and Have Not*'s tragic revelation is Morgan's cry, "A damn alone ain't got no bloody f— chance"; *A Farewell to Arms* has a love-death pathos worthy of Puccini; but what Williams does is to impose a formal aesthetic patterning on what Hemingway kept contingent, understated and sometimes inarticulate. His attitude to tragedy best summed up by his remark to Scott Fitzgerald that *The Sun Also Rises* was "one hell of a sad story". This was not a defensive naïveté — the recently published letters show him ready to acknowledge stylistic debts to Pound, Stein, Flaubert and Turgenev.

Writing for Hemingway was a masculine activity, a sporting challenge, like big game or bulls. The firm, clean lines of adventure story — Hemingway if you like it, *Boys Don't Cry* if you don't — resists the masochistic ethics of courage, honour and physical endurance dominant in his fiction. Such economy of means may

lead, as the young Henry James remarked to economy of ends, but Williams has inflated the ends without even considering the means. He adds nothing to Hemingway's status by ignoring its limitations of intention. "There isn't any symbolism," Hemingway wrote to Bernard Berenson of *The Old Man and the Sea*: "The sea is the sea. The Old Man is an old man." Williams casts even the black wrestler as Faulkner and the turtles as hack journalism.

The other critical theme of this book is a musical analogy. Picking up virtually nothing more than Hemingway's childhood competence on the cello, Williams proposes the profound influence of Sonata Form and Counterpoint — two characters become "opposing keys in the fugue structure", a narrative line becomes a "melody", and a change of scene an "alteration of key". Any work of literature which contains elements of contrast and development could be analysed in such a vocabulary, and its persistence here is quite exasperating.

## Copy-book reading

John Adlard

KRISTIN BRADY

The Short Stories of Thomas Hardy: Tales of Past and Present  
235pp. Macmillan. £17.50.  
0 333 31531 6

It has often been lamented of late that Hardy's short stories are neglected. Now Kristin Brady, in a comprehensive study, has done her best to remedy this. In four long chapters she surveys the development of Hardy's concept of the short story between 1863 and 1900.

She sees *Wessex Tales* as "pastoral histories". Like Shakespeare's characters retirog into the forest to return with a new vision, we, the readers, enter a Wessex which is actually a dream state, which distils from the limited and chaotic history of Dorset what is perennially and essentially true. There is less reliance on tradition and more on the printed page in the stories of *A Group of Noble Dames*. These she calls "ambivalent exempla"; they present moral situations; they are ambivalent because none embodies an all-embracing truth, and because there is a contradiction between the response of the reader and that of the narrator. The "convention-bound" members of an antiquarian club. She describes *Life's Little Ironies* as "tragedies of circumstance"; these tales deal with conventions of the present and the frustrations and dissatisfactions they bring, especially to women.

Every story is conscientiously analysed. Occasionally the analysis is unsatisfactory. In "On the Western Circuit" Charles Ray's surname has an "obvious" symbolism for Professor Brady, despite that final "e", though nothing in the text supports this; yet she ignores that really named "treasure machine" on which *A Man and His Dog* is mindless ecstasy, in the company of many fellow-creatures the duration of whose pleasure depends on the whim of the "inexorable stoker". In "An Imaginative Woman" she might have noted further irony in the contempt plainly shown for Robert Trewe and his poetry by the narrator, as well as the critics in the story, and the evidence that, in the unlikely event of her marrying him, Ella would have found him as self-absorbed and insensitive a husband as Marchmont.

Brady is aware that the stories have suffered not only neglect but also a fair amount of scorn. Joyce deplored their "copy-book talk". John Berryman called them "the worst short stories that the world has ever seen". Springing to their defence Brady makes claims for them that cannot be justified. "Ambivalent exempla" is a phrase that dignifies the lates in *A Group of Noble Dames* far beyond their deserts; they are really only a "good light read", full of improbabilities and muddled/farable absurdities, while the bridge-passages introducing the Club are brief and perfunctory.

As she admits, Hardy in *Life's Little Ironies* presents "familiar scenarios, mostly of the sort found in current sentimental fiction", and the fact that he defies our expectations by altering or inverting the morals of these plots still leaves us to digest as best we may a standard magazine story with its "copy-book talk". Hardy, Professor Brady tells us, wrote stories "as original in form and style as the stories of a Chekhov, a Joyce, or a Hemingway". This sounds more like propagandizing than the exercise of literary judgment.

## Ground floor memories

Edward Nell

JOHN GORDON

James Joyce's Metamorphoses  
217pp. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.  
£14.  
0 7171 1024 9

"Work in all you know. Make them accomplices." Stephen's darkly plotted, subtext to his travesty of Shakespeare in *Ulysses* is surely a clue to Joycean procedures generally. Even the best of writers can get rather personae at times, but Joyce was these obsessions. Wholly in keeping with these obsessions is the fact that the most spirited parts of John Gordon's book are on Stephen's agonistic use of Shakespeare and Joyce's artifice use of Nora's authors, real or ideal. Even his last chapter on *Finnegans Wake* confesses that though Joyce, as an incest family man, is changing some very heavy linguistic net-curtains, this is precisely because we are closer than ever to the gobs of in the Irishman's home. "Like Antaeus," Gordon to the hard and solid ground his feet, "he keeps returning, fresh and full of strength from which he renews his strength." It is almost unbelievable to believe in these substructures still to be entertained, yet continue to lament the general lack of proper critical

Gordon's book, perhaps too metamorphic by itself, has no real argument to offer. It very quickly settles down to being yet another section by section exegesis, from *Dubliners* to *Finnegans Wake*, though principally concerned with *Ulysses*. Yet as such it is very far from being a primer, as the account of the narrator's vagaries and vicissitudes in *Dubliners* alone would show. Its strength lies in its remembering Joyce's reminder to his friend Frank Budgen that the imagination is memory. Its weakness is that its regulative concepts are only mythic devices — Antaeus, Proteus and Narcissus. These devices are used in the service of what would appear to be the ultimate general point, which is that the mind is in the world and the world is in the mind, and that Joyce is very good at dramatizing the fact. Proteus is reality, Narcissus is what mind all alone becomes; and Stephen as the nearest thing to a narcissist is partly condemned in consequence. Bloom is, we are solemnly told, "a far less limited man".

At this point it is necessary to remember that Gordon, perched on a mountain of commentary, archive material, fascinate notesheets and the like, is merely the heir to a line of thought, which pausing only to switch off the current of Joyce's irony, floods sermons in Bloom. Forgotten in Joyce's hard, sardonic, spiritual, father Flaubert, Gordon even goes so far as to add Trollope and Thackeray to the



# The Brigadier's innings

Alan Ross

PETER TINNISWOOD

Collected Tales from a Long Room  
262pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.  
0 091501407

The Brigadier, Peter Tinniswood tells us, was born in Arlott St John's. "He loves fine claret, Vimto, quail in season, baroque balloons, blotting paper," E. W. Swanson and his sister Gloria. "So far, so good." I have had the honour of the Brigadier remarks by way of introduction. "In the name of freedom and natural justice to slaughter and maim men (and women) of countless creeds and races," the Brigadier is on Blimp, though, for he is quick to admit "it is my firm opinion that all the victims of this carnage and slaughter were just like you and I - upstart from their disgusting table manners and their revolting appearance. Poor chaps, they had only two failings - they were foreigners and they were on the wrong side."

You cannot say finer than that. On such simple principles the Brigadier lived out his life and in the evening of it he makes Mr Tinniswood free of the details.

Most, but not all, of the main incidents are to do with cricket. The Brigadier, who has little liking for sex - particularly during Test Match Special - is a repository of arcane fact. For example, he knows all about the hitherto-concealed cricketing prowess of Queen Victoria, who had "the athletic grace of a Frank Woolley, the snow-white teeth of a Learie

Constantine, the combative pugnacity of a Freddie Trueman, the dark, hairy legs of a W. G. Grace". It was, according to the Brigadier, only by repeatedly making her pregnant that the Prince Consort could curb her cricketing proclivities. Even so she used often to open the batting incognito for Quidnuncs and the Free Foresters, and tie one on in the back parlour of The Bat and Boll. The Brigadier, however, discounts the rumour that she achieved reincarnation in the form of George Duckworth, preferring to believe that it was Mr Bill Alley that she fulfilled her undoubted umpiring talents.

The Brigadier, in his roamings about the world, met many famous people: cricket writers, for example: "How the names trip off the tongue: Neville Cardew, R. C. Robertson-Hare, Bruce Woodcock of *The Times*, who achieved

greater fame early in his career as a pugilist of distinction, and E. W. Swanson, father and brother respectively of that uniquely glamorous star of the moving kinematograph, Miss Gloria Arlott. To anyone not at all faint with cricket, cricketers and hangers-on the Brigadier's reminiscences would, unfortunately, make as little sense as a pamphlet in Urdu on birth-control to a Trappist monk. For cricket is the context in which his richly-stocked mind wanders, cricketers are the hit-men who galvanize his whisky-and-sun-stunned consciousness.

Peter Tinniswood is an unobtrusive listener, in fact, he does not say a word from first to last. But had he not something like total recall, the Brigadier's long, sometimes over-long monologues would have been lost on the world.

That would have been a pity, for the Brigadier is an inspired raconteur whose bluff exterior conceals an alarming amount of knowledge - whether first- or second-hand it is often hard to say. He has fingered, for example, Patrick Eagar's scarce *The Nude in County Cricket* and the almost unobtainable E. W. "Gloria" Swanson's *A Down and Out in Howe and Taubridge Wells*. He knows the sayings of E. R. "Elizabeth Regino" Dexter by heart and can reveal when it was who might have carried a treasured fragment of "Monkey" Hornby's underpants in his tin trunk.

But the Brigadier is no gossip; rather, he is one whose flights of fancy and speculation rank him with Breton, Pinter, Pinter and Edgar Allan Poe. A closer surrealist, he proceeds, by association of images. His claw-back memory, rifling the talloys of the

past, plucking eerie tunes out of a summer air, can joust with Nabokov and Ionesco on equal terms. Nabokov cricketer - rather than revolutionary empires - stirred such a potent conflicting incident and emotional recipes and rigmorals.

Tinniswood takes the Brigadier version of events as gospel. By Gibson may well be the father of the black tennis-champion Althea Gibson. Denis Amis the author of *Lord T. S. Eliot* the brother of the unknown imple, D. H. Lawrence, a writer of a cricketing epic *See and Govers*. If he thinks differently he now, it is the Brigadier's findings, it oil, and if he wants to put the Brigadier, Roll and Whitney Scrutiny, well, should Tinniswood bite the hand that feeds him?

## Revelling in strange sorrows

E. S. Turner

PETER HAINING (Editor)

Shades of Dracula: Bram Stoker's Uncollected Stories  
204pp. William Kimber. £6.50.  
0 7183 0159 5

The Dracula industry, though now based in Romania, maintains worldwide cultural outposts, four of which are mentioned in Peter Haining's acknowledgements: the Dracula Society of London, the Count Dracula Society of Los Angeles, the Bram

Stoker Society of Dublin and the Vampire Information Exchange of New York.

Could it have been the Vampire Information Exchange which interested Mr Haining in a neglected newspaper report he says before us as the probable catalyst to the vampire fancies already in Stoker's mind, leading to the writing of *Dracula*? The cutting was found in Stoker's papers and is from the *New York World* early in 1896. Quoting "an ethnologist of repute", it tells at length how, in the late nineteenth century, superstitious Rhode Islanders became so convinced that consumption was passed on by the

undead rising from their graves and draining the blood of the living that they conducted "scores of exhumations" in order to burn the heads of their once-loved ones. Since *Dracula* appeared in 1897 this may well have been the immediate inspiration of a novel which Stoker himself is supposed to have jokingly attributed to a heavy supper of dressed eel. (The other theories about what inspired this horrific masterpiece are well summarised in Daniel Farnson's *The Man Who Was Dracula*, published in 1975).

Stoker, who was manager to Sir Henry Irving, wrote much horror fiction, most of it now forgotten. His widow published a volume of his short stories, but other projected collections did not appear. Now Haining, an indefatigable anthologist of tales of the macabre, has rounded up a curious assortment of Stoker's stories, all of which, he claims, "relate in some way or other" to *Dracula*.

In his early tales, if these are representative, Stoker gave signs of a morbid, over-heated sensibility, in which he rolled like a dog in carrion. In *The Crystal Cup* we have "Three, Oh Aurora, I will wait in the land of flowers, where thou and I will wander, never more to part, never more Alas, never more Farewell, Aurora - Aurora!" "The Castle of the King" features a distraught poet, in search of his lost love, traversing the Valley of the Shadow, fending off serpents and mandrakes, and eventually rejoining his beloved in the castle of the King of Death. Another tale of the Valley of the Shadow, published in 1907, is filled with visions of delirium and perhaps, says Haining, reflected the feelings of a then very sick man. Any links between *Dracula* and these Bunyanesque fancies and revellings in strange sorrows are hard to discern. The tales may even disappoint those who are eager to

discover sexual pointers in Stoker's works (again, see Farnson's list).

Stoker's strong suit was the use of unseemly and macabre, as in *Chain of Destiny* (published by A. Stoker Esq.), involving a mad curse; but he depended heavily on props as splitting skies and castles. The best story in this volume "Walpurgis Night", which had been intended as a prelude to *Dracula*, which was dropped at the publisher's request for reasons of length. It has been published before and stands as a good vampire story in its own right.

The most freakish item, *Holloway*, turned up in a story, exactly quarter of the book, which is by Stoker but by an American who wrote as Ralph Milne Farley. It was published in *World* and purports to be "based on an actual late Bram Stoker", as confirmed by Farnson. It is a tale of a man who reads as if Stephen Leacock decided to introduce a very elegant Latin name of his "Sketches of a Little Town", which is a very nice book, but which Stoker might have found unacceptable; a fatal tendency to levity, for example. The publisher has been joking too. Page 177 has a red ink correction: "The red ink correction" which it would be a pity to correct. The few red stinks began to show in the eastern sky.

If, as some say, Stoker had had a sequel in *Dracula*, set in America, can this be the sort of thing he had in mind? Mildly. Mr Haining says that there are elements of this which Stoker might have found unacceptable; a fatal tendency to levity, for example. The publisher has been joking too. Page 177 has a red ink correction: "The red ink correction" which it would be a pity to correct. The few red stinks began to show in the eastern sky.

## An eye on the truth

Naomi Mitchison

STORM JAMESON

Company Parade  
345pp.  
Women Against Men  
293pp.  
Virago. £3.50 each.

In Storm Jameson's *Journey from the North*, one of the best ever autobiographies, written in the 1960s, there are several chapters about her early life in London, trying to write a successful novel, worrying about her husband's infidelities and tending off the attentions of a GI toughie. After reading that, it is clear that Hervey Russell, the protagonist of *Company Parade*, is none other than the young Storm. And yet, not quite. For the girl in the violent, sharply written novel is only reacting against one war, whereas the writer of the autobiography, a generation later, has been through another war and the horror of her beloved Europe almost overwhelmed by Nazi and fascist ideas and actions, and has also been deeply hurt and disappointed by Stalin's Russia.

In this novel Hervey stresses the break between pre-1914 and post-1918 England, but perhaps there was an even bigger break to come between the 1930s and 50s - or now. Hervey was meant to be the main character of a series. All the other people, some of whom appear in brilliant sketches and some of whom die but will be remembered, were to be developed later on. In fact, she only wrote two more novels in this series: by the mid-1930s her eyes were on Hitler and the German nation.

In *Company Parade* we are reminded of the Treaty of Versailles,

of the almost incredible speeches of the politicians on the winning side, and of the popular newspapers headlining the "winning Huns" while at least some of the British soldiers in the army of occupation were trying to share their rations with starving children. Yet we must also remember that *The Times*, in those days our dear old Thunderer, had the courage to print Siegfried Sassoon's anti-war poems. That war had not hit the civilian population unless of course they had sons, lovers, fathers, dying in the trench warfare, the realities of which were always hidden. For the rest, business as usual was the motto - and how horribly successful some of the businessmen, and their women, were. The other motto was *Homes for Heroes*, also debunked in this book. For Hervey turns a raging, piercing eye on it all. Or rather, Storm Jameson does.

What kind of writer was she? My feeling is that she was short on imagination; but she had - almost certainly still has - an amazing eye for truth and a capacity for writing it down. This is north-country English and something that is far more necessary in difficult times than all the imagination in the world. Naturally Hervey's home town, Danesmore, which in the real world is the Whitby of sixty years ago, comes through as clearly as though one lived there.

But why did Storm Jameson write novels, which demand at least a certain amount of imagination? First, because it was the obvious way to earn the money which she needed, mostly for her baby son, towards whom she felt a kind of guilt - her alter ego in this novel makes that very plain. But also because she wanted to draw public attention to specific wrongs and injustices and felt, perhaps correctly, that she could do it through a novel, but not through political journalism or public speaking. Fiction has been open to women for some time, but for handling factual

material men are supposed in her more acceptable. Writing novels, unless they are very long and apparently based on monumental research, is still rather down-market. Yet anyone looking for a factual picture of England immediately after the First World War could not do better than this book, even if it is a novel.

The three long-short stories in *Women Against Men* give us yet another look into a now non-existent English world, mainly that of London. But there is nobody in them who comes through as sharply as Hervey Russell. The "I" of the first story starts, Hervey-like, as a clever girl-child with a dominant, angry mother, she also writes an unsuccessful first novel. But her opposite number, the successful intellectual lady who turns out to have been entirely misunderstood her own daughter, is not nearly as plausible as Evelyn in *Company Parade*. Again, there is a kind of caricature of Arnold Bennett as he might have been, though in fact wasn't.

The second story is more complex, and the people in it are more interesting. This is because at bottom it is about class and cross-class relationships. This has always fascinated British readers, and does so now even more than in the 1930s when the edges were only too clear. The third story of this collection is the best and the most memorable. It tells of a day in the life and hard times of an un-named but exhaustively described woman who has been around with men and lived off them all her life. She isn't at all nice and what she does is deeply shocking, but we find ourselves compelled to share her anxieties and greeds and her memories of the men who have turned her into what she is. But I'm not sure why this collection is called *Women Against Men*. These women might just as well have been against class or against customary morals, or even against themselves.

## Paperback fiction in brief

Patricia Craig

ANNA KATHARINE GREEN  
The Leavenworth Case  
311pp. Constable. £7.75.

The Leavenworth Case is one of the more celebrated curiosities of detective fiction; its early date (1878) makes it the first detective novel by a woman to be published in book form. Moreover, it presents, albeit in a rudimentary way, a number of the features later associated with such novels: painstaking investigation of emphasis on clues ("I see a faint line of smut near one of the chambers"), an apparently undistinguished hero (the New York Inspector Gryce). A little ponderous, and often unintentionally funny, it is nevertheless a good early example of the genre.

GEORGE MACDONALD

Phantastes  
167pp. Bookmarks. £4.95.

George MacDonald's "fairy tale for adults", first published in 1858, makes a romantic allegory (though its images and implications are not strictly allegorical), as MacDonald pointed out of the process of growing up. Significant encounters, trials of moral strength and many fantastic dangers await the hero whose bedroom, on the morning after his twenty-first birthday, turns into a woodland glade. This novel, which points forward to Lewis's "Narnia" books, suffers somewhat from Victorian prolixity and some cliché.

WILLA CATHER

My Mortal Enemy  
122pp. Virago. £2.50.

This short novel, first published in 1917, is a study in the psychology of the "other" - the one point of view is that of the heroine, who is a "different" person, precisely what the novel is about. It is a study in the psychology of the "other" - the one point of view is that of the heroine, who is a "different" person, precisely what the novel is about.

first person by a young girl who meets the central character only twice, but finds her own understanding and perception enlarged by the encounters.

E. ARNOT ROBERTSON  
Ordinary Families  
331pp. Virago. £3.50.

"Ordinary people are peculiar too", Louis MacNeice wrote; this, as far as one can gather, is the underlying theme of E. Arnot Robertson's fourth novel (originally published in 1933). Unlike certain present-day writers, however, she doesn't pick and choose with cunning among the instances of ordinariness available to her; everything, as far as she can manage it, goes in - boating, bird-watching, village life, class distinctions, domestic tensions, moments of mortification. It's easy to spot the qualities that got E. Arnot Robertson condemned as a middlebrow novelist when her books first appeared - wordiness, deep feeling, apparent frankness, smoothness of tone. At her best, she is a graceful and accurate observer of everyday felicities and tribulations; there is something dispiriting about this novel, though.

REBECCA WEST

The Return of the Soldier  
111pp. Fontana. £1.25.

In Rebecca West's first novel, originally published in 1918, a shell-shocked officer is sent home from the Front with all memory of his wife obliterated. The psychological implications of this particular affliction are plain enough; and so, it is gradually revealed, is the course of action necessary to effect a cure. Rebecca West handles her rather ornate theme with composure and a measure of irony. *The Return of the Soldier* is also more lucid and economical than her later fiction.

WILLIAM BOYD

On the Yankee Station  
168pp. Penguin. £1.50.

William Boyd's stories attract all the usual terms of praise: crisp, witty,

energetic, effortless and so on. Many of them are impersonations, and the author slips with ease from one narrative manner to another, reproducing the exact tones of a girl in a side-show or an articulate psychopath. He is best, perhaps, on the erotic preoccupations of adolescence, overcharged and underplayed; but nothing in this accomplished collection is less than diverting.

CAROLINE BLACKWOOD

The Fate of Mary Rose  
206pp. Penguin. £1.50.

The effect of one child's murder on the parents of another child is the theme of this unsettling, sardonic novel, in which morbid imaginings proliferate. The voice of the narrator, distant, detached and unsympathetic as the novel begins, gradually acquires a note of outrage as the elements of muddle and nastiness in his life become ungovernable. Sharp, striking and often grimly humorous, *The Fate of Mary Rose* is Caroline Blackwood's most substantial work to date.

VERITY BARGATE

Th for Tat  
157pp. Fontana. £1.50.

Verity Bargate, who died last year, is the author of three jarring novels. With hindsight, it's easy to identify the impulse behind this writer's raw-edged fiction: rage against a female, misery, bodily affliction and blight. *Th for Tat*, the last of the group, is based on a grisly conflict of three people, "getting your own back", "cutting off your nose to spite your face" and "mocking's catching". The emotional effect is powerful and liberating, but it is achieved at the expense of subtlety and virtuosity.

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## Hot stuff, old fruit

Michael Trend

MAX HENNESSY

The Bright Blue Sky  
240pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.  
0 241 10898 5

It is 1914, and Nicholas Dicken Quinley is off to watch a cricket at Brighton. He misses the train; that afternoon he discovers instead the joys of flying and of the opposite sex. But we are only on page 14 - a cloud drifts across the clear blue sky of Old England, the shots of Sarajevo re-echo round the world and the story lifts off. Dicken's King and Country need him, and via the Royal Garrison Artillery he finds up in the Royal Flying Corps first as an observer and then as a pilot.

Max Hennessy's *The Bright Blue Sky* takes us from these early days of an organized air force, through the formation of the RAF to the preparation for the days of peace following the end of the First World War. It reminds one of the splendid breed of films made after the Second World War, such as *The Dam Busters* or *Shik the Samurai*; we jump straight into the action. There is no scene-setting, no need to explain the background or to worry about the rights and wrongs - action is all. The novel is a welcome reminder of how things were done in the heroic days.

Dicken is posted to the Western Front, where brave men refer to their friends as "old fruit" and foes as "that gadget". Dicken soon has one of each clearly marked out: Willie Hatto, Lord Hoop's youngest son, may wear a monocle, but we soon discover that he is a devil-may-care air cadet. The "gadget" is Cecil Diplock, also known as "Parasol Percy", the soon-to-be washed-up, whose radiant beauty so obsessed our hero when the world was still green and pleasant.

In France the young men learn the exciting possibilities of carrying warfare into the air. Richthofen is putting together his "circus" north of the trenches but, the British are at a disadvantage: flying their cumbersome BEs, always unpopular with the flyers. The airman lives, sky seconds to the minute, and although their battles are savagely they feel the camaraderie of

men involved in a new and dangerous occupation. But fighting comes first, and all points in between: there are no Saint-Exupéry in the squadron, on leave in London the two friends eat in the Café Royal, go to *The Mid of the Mountains* and Dicken spends the night with Maud, a society girl. "I ought to have warned you. She's rather hot stuff," Hatto tells him - too late. No serious damage is done, however, and they are soon safely back at the front.

The obnoxious Diplock is now revealed as yellow in the face of the enemy but a wizard at pulling strings in the RAF. Dicken is posted to North Italy to face the Austrian flyers, and by now a familiar pattern is developing: Hatto and Diplock are never far behind, there is a new model of aeroplane to fly, another girl round the corner.

Although the novel is only one layer deep it is very exciting, and has the double interest of tracing both the rise

of the aeroplane as a weapon of war and the fortunes of an entertaining group of characters. *The Bright Blue Sky* is the first of a projected trilogy, and already we can speculate as to whether Dicken will marry the liberated Zoe, Annys's aircraft-obsessed sister, or somehow end up with Annys herself (she will surely see through Cecil Diplock before three novels are over); there is the delightful Nicola, now in Madras, and perhaps we have not heard the last of fast-flying Maud? Will the appalling Cecil Diplock continue his rise to the top as our hero Dicken shows a new generation of fighter pilots how to fly the Hurricane in Volume Three?

One wonders at, and admires, the energy of the author, Max Hennessy's use of the pseudonyms of John Harris, "ex-sailor, ex-airman, ex-history teacher". He has already penned *The Lion at Sea*, about the Royal Navy, and *A Cavalry Trilogy*. All in a day's work, old fruit.

## Looking into the schism

Keith Jeffery

T. J. BINYON

Swan Song  
203pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.95.  
0 241 10888 8

Vanya Morozov is a rational, civilized and uninvolved academic: a social introvert wedded to a comfortable, quiet living in Moscow university. Devoted to the study of English literature, he prefers his authors dead and buried, and "preferably far away on the shores of misty Albion." From the relative security of his teaching job he is little more than a spectator of life, occasionally indulging in bouts of self-critical reflection, and his head is impaled towards "self-redemption". *Swan Song* begins as Vanya's generally unexciting and unimpassioned life is roughly interrupted by two secret policemen who open for him Pandora's box of old lies, obligations and emotional entanglements.

Much of the novel revolves around the relationship between Vanya and three friends from his student days with whom he spent an intense, idyllic summer twelve years before. While Vanya has more or less vegetated in the intervening period, the others have made a greater mark in the world. The coldly ambitious Alk is a rising star in the KGB. Tanya, a sporadically famous reputation as a film-director, while Lyuba, a former lover of both Vanya and Alk, now seems to be deeply involved in some sort of millennialist religious sect which evidently poses a grave, if not entirely specific, threat to the Soviet status quo. Alk engages Vanya both to find Lyuba and to explore the scope of the religious subversion.

Few of the characters are exactly what they seem on first appearance. Vanya soon evinces a facility for quick thinking and resolute action. Alk, who is thought of as a "cold" man, is a man of great energy and a man of great energy and a man of great energy.

driving force behind this revival is provided by Father Zakhar - a "Savonarola of the steppes" who believes that a fusion of socialism with faith will bring about the kingdom of God upon earth. The priest, however, seems quite at home with radio transmitters as with liturgical affairs and his preposterous plan to overthrow the government, Foreign Intelligence interests are represented by an American pseudo-journalist and an fulfilment. On a third, though, the necessarily deeper, level the novel encompasses a wide exploration of the Russian past. Although Binyon's knowledge of Russian life and society is powerfully illuminating, it is more, difficult to estimate his contribution to the novel's impact. The reviewer of crime novels might say that his own first thriller, if nothing else, has bravely switched to a new genre. The novel is one point of view is that of the heroine, who is a "different" person, precisely what the novel is about.

T. J. Binyon, himself, holds a university lectureship in Russian and is clearly well qualified to write about the Soviet Union; no *Gorky* Park package tour research here. While the novel is intermittently over-learned and occasionally presupposes a broad familiarity with Russian letters on the part of the reader, it is also highly informative about some of the more obscure areas of Russian spiritual life. Vanya's own "redemption" is a journey into the heart of the Soviet Union, a journey into the heart of the Soviet Union, a journey into the heart of the Soviet Union.

encompassing relatively "mundane" and "runner", a "eccentric" "milk-drinkers", and a positively odd self-assertion, in the 1970s by one Savonarola who aim of establishing the rule of a eastrated throughout the world.

*Swan Song* is an investigation into the search for Lyuba. Vanya's more personal quest for fulfilment. On a third, though, the necessarily deeper, level the novel encompasses a wide exploration of the Russian past. Although Binyon's knowledge of Russian life and society is powerfully illuminating, it is more, difficult to estimate his contribution to the novel's impact. The reviewer of crime novels might say that his own first thriller, if nothing else, has bravely switched to a new genre. The novel is one point of view is that of the heroine, who is a "different" person, precisely what the novel is about.

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Somerset County Council

LIBRARY SERVICE

Deputy County Librarian

Salary: £12,111-£13,299 per annum  
(National Pay Award pending)

The post of Deputy County Librarian has become vacant following the appointment of the previous postholder as County Librarian of Buckinghamshire. The person appointed will be a Chartered Librarian with considerable administrative and managerial ability, especially in regard to local government finance and personnel matters. He/she will have a wide experience of the public library service, and a detailed knowledge of the book trade and current literature. The post is based at Bridgwater.

Further details and an application form returnable not later than 22nd November, 1982 are available from the County Librarian, Library Administration, Mount Street, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 3BS. Tel: Bridgwater 451201, Telex: 46395.

Nene College, Northampton

Applications are invited from qualified Librarians (male or female) for the post of:

Assistant Librarian (Serials)

Salary AP2/3 £5,064-£6,333 (under review)

In Nene College Library Service. Application form and further details send SAE to: Deputy Senior Administrative Officer, Nene College, Moulton Park, Northampton NN2 7AL. Closing date 5th November, 1982.

DUBLIN

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Grades 1 and 2

Applications are invited from suitably qualified candidates for the post of Assistant Librarian in the College Library. The post is in a busy library and the successful candidate will be expected to help run the library and to be responsible for the collection of books and journals. The successful candidate will be expected to help run the library and to be responsible for the collection of books and journals. The successful candidate will be expected to help run the library and to be responsible for the collection of books and journals.

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